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# MR. GANDHI: THE MAN

*by*

MILLIE GRAHAM POLAK

*Foreword by*

C. F. ANDREWS

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## FOREWORD

Some seventeen years ago, in Durban, it was my privilege first to meet Mrs. Polak, who has written these reminiscences of Mr. Gandhi. The picture that she draws, by means of a series of incidents, brings back vividly to my own mind the strain, mingled with a buoyant happiness, that was felt by all those who took part, under Mr. Gandhi's leadership, in the Passive Resistance struggle, then at its height.

It was clear to me how greatly Mrs. Polak had suffered. Yet there was a brightness in her face as she welcomed me to her home which told of radiant happiness within.

Owing to her husband's imprisonment a few weeks earlier, just when he was leaving for India, at Mr. Gokhale's request, to help to place the South African Indian cause once again before the Motherland, she had been urged by the Indian community to go in his stead to the Indian National Congress, then about to meet; but, when already on her journey, she had been recalled to South Africa by Mr. Gokhale with the news that I was on my way there.

Just before my arrival, her husband, Henry Polak, whom I had already known for some years, had been released from prison with Mr. Gandhi. He, too, was looking worn on account

of recent hardships cheerfully endured. But he was enthusiastic about the Indian cause. It was a gay and gallant spirit with which they both, with their children, had confronted innumerable difficulties and overcome them. There was a certainty of victory in the very air which they and their fellow-workers breathed.

Of Henry Polak, in those South African days, the Rev. J. J. Doke, of Johannesburg, who knew him intimately, wrote as follows:

"In the law courts he had been the British Indians' advocate; in the office he had been their adviser, and always their friend. At the same time he had devoted himself to their general interests throughout South Africa by pen and speech with wonderful persistence. Like all great leaders of men, Mr. Gandhi had the magic power of attracting and attaching to himself the passionate devotion of such characters as Henry Polak."

Concerning Mrs. Polak, Mr. Gandhi, in *Satyagraha in South Africa*, wrote these words: "People in India are familiar with Mrs. Polak, who not only never came in her husband's way, but was a perfect help-meet to him during the struggle."

Among the tiny group of European helpers that had gathered round Mr. Gandhi, Mr. and Mrs. Polak not only became his fellow-workers, but shared his own home with him and joined in the intimacy of family life. Their elder son,

Waldo, who, as will be seen from this book, was peculiarly dear to Mr. Gandhi, died suddenly a few years ago. I was in Durban when the unexpected news came. It was most touching and revealing to me to witness the deep affection for and sympathy with the bereaved parents among those Indians who had known them all in earlier years.

It seemed well to explain at some length these simple relationships, because they form the best introduction to the narrative itself and help to bring us at once in touch with the writer of this book. As she relates in a direct and life-like manner one story after another about Mr. Gandhi, in the course of his daily life of service, she at the same time gives us quite unconsciously an insight into her own independent character. The *naïveté* with which she does this makes it all the more effective, because it is so spontaneous. It would be impossible to find a better foil to set off the peculiar temperament of Mr. Gandhi. With a strong imagination of her own, she is yet critical and stands upon solid fact, where he soars into the sky. Though an idealist herself, she seeks by rare common sense and penetrating insight to test his theories and check what she regards as his extravagances. In this way, she clears aside all kinds of fantastic notions about him and reveals him as the most tender soul in all the world and humble in spirit as a little child.

But all this the readers will find out for themselves in the narrative that follows. They will discover that Mr. Gandhi is astonishingly and delightfully human. They will find in him a character which at times will remind them of St. Francis of Assisi by its inner radiance and beauty. At other times, they will share in Mrs. Polak's own difficulties that arose in the intimacy of the daily life and the sharing of a common household with such an intractable and lovable saint, who will always insist upon discomfort. While the legendary fantasies that surround Mr. Gandhi to-day are eliminated one by one, his personality shines through her narrative all the brighter, and as a man he comes much closer to our hearts.

C. F. ANDREWS

## P R E F A C E

Often, during the past few years, since Mr. Gandhi has become a world-figure, people that my husband and I have met, knowing of our old close association with him, have questioned us concerning him. "You knew him in his home-life. What was he like as a man? How did he respond to his environment in those days? In what things was he then mainly interested? Is it possible to discover in his thoughts and activities of those days the mainsprings of his later ideas and actions?"

And in the discussions that resulted, some of the incidents related in the following pages have been recalled by me. "Why don't you write that down?" was the frequent comment. But I had always refused to do so. The sacredness of the intimate talk of friendship would, it seemed to me, have been violated by publication. Then came the *Autobiography*, and, with something of a shock, I realized that Mr. Gandhi himself had not hesitated to strip the veil off everything that he had thought or experienced, and that I need not have been hypersensitive about recording my own recollections of those days.

About a year ago, in reading through some old papers and letters, I came across a few of Mr. Gandhi's letters to me and found some note-book



jottings of events that had happened in earlier years. I put some of them together, and let the thought of writing about them sink in.

Later on, in more talks of the Mahatma with some American friends, I was again urged to put into print some of my reminiscences of one who was not to me, first, a Mahatma or a saint or a "subtle politician," but a great and loving man, who had shown to me and mine an affection that transcended race and sex and time. I replied eventually that I was thinking over the suggestion.

"Do," was the answer. "I can promise you a great interest in what you may recall about him."

Hence this small book.

The conversations recorded here are not word for word precisely as, or in the order in which, they happened. The significant passages, however, in every conversation are exactly as they were spoken by Mr. Gandhi, and the others are as nearly so as can now be reproduced; true in the spirit, if not quite exact in the letter. All kinds of things, of course, besides those touched upon in these pages were discussed between us.

The incidents themselves are actual happenings; but in a few instances, where others than Mr. Gandhi are also concerned, I have slightly altered the names and the setting, so that no pain should be given to those that played a part in them and now figure in the episodes without their knowledge and consent.

It only remains to add that whilst there will, in the following pages, be found many references to the Indian Passive Resistance movement in South Africa, I have especially sought to avoid the political controversies surrounding it, in order the better to focus the reader's attention upon the great central human figure.

M. G. P.

LONDON, *July*, 1931.



# MR. GANDHI: THE MAN

## CHAPTER I

It was in 1905 that I had my first contact with Mahatma Gandhi. I was in London and expecting to be able to go out shortly to South Africa to marry my *fiancé*, Mr. Henry S. L. Polak. He was at that time articled to Mr. Gandhi, of the Inner Temple, London, who was then practising as an attorney or solicitor in Johannesburg.

I had not been in robust health for some time, and my *fiancé's* father, on hearing that I was preparing to join his son, had written to Mr. Gandhi begging him to use his influence to postpone the marriage indefinitely, as he did not consider that I was physically strong enough for the strenuous life of the Colonies. Mr. Gandhi's reply to this and his subsequent letter to me, the first that I had had from him, set the tone to the whole of my relationship with him, establishing him in my life as a loving and understanding elder brother, and showed the human tenderness of the man.

To Mr. Polak, senior, he wrote that "if the young lady in question was not at that time in robust health in London, all the more reason for her to hasten her departure from it, so that in South Africa, amidst loving care, a beautiful

climate and a simple life, she could gain the physical strength she evidently needed." To me he wrote assuring me of a warm welcome in his home, where every possible care, he said, would be given to me, and where my *fiancé* was already as a member of his family.

Two or three other friendly letters passed between us, and then, at six o'clock on the morning of December 30, 1905, I arrived at Jeppe Station, Johannesburg, and I found Mr. Gandhi and Mr. Polak waiting on the platform for me.

My first impression of Mr. Gandhi was of a medium-sized man, rather slenderly built, skin not very dark, mouth rather heavy lipped, a small dark moustache, and the kindest eyes in the world, that seemed to light up from within when he spoke. His eyes were always his most remarkable feature and were in reality the lamps of his soul; one could read so much from them. His voice was soft, rather musical, and almost boyishly fresh. I particularly noticed this as we chatted of the little things of my journey and proceeded to his home. ✓

The house was situated in a fairly good middle-class neighbourhood, on the outskirts of the town. It was a double-storied, detached, eight-roomed building of the modern villa type, surrounded by a garden, and having, in front, the open spaces of the kopjes. The upstairs verandah was roomy enough to sleep on it, if one wished to

do so, and, indeed, in the warm weather, it was often so used.

The household, I learned, consisted of Mr. Gandhi, his wife and three sons, Manilal, aged eleven, Ramdas, aged nine, and Devdas, aged six, a young Englishman engaged in the telegraph service, a young Indian ward of Mr. Gandhi's, and Mr. Polak. My addition to the family completed its possibilities of accommodation.

Later that morning I had my first experience of the strained state of racial relations in the Transvaal. The banns of our intended marriage had been put up at the magistrate's office, according to law, and we had supposed that everything was in order when we appeared before the Registrar of Marriages for the civil ceremony. After taking the necessary particulars, however, we were surprised when he excused himself and disappeared for some time. It being a Saturday morning, and the office closing at noon, we became somewhat anxious. Mr. Gandhi accordingly went over to the Chief Magistrate's office to enquire the cause of the delay. The Chief Magistrate was a personal friend of some years' standing, and had been a member of a Theosophical group, with whom Mr. Gandhi had read a great deal of Hindu religious philosophy. Though not himself a Theosophist, he had very many friends who were, and in those more peace-

ful years he occasionally gave lectures to Theosophical lodges.

To his surprise, Mr. Gandhi learnt that the Registrar had raised the question of the legality of our marriage, since, under the Transvaal Law, marriage between a white and a coloured person was prohibited, and any marriage officer performing the same rendered himself liable to heavy penalties. The Registrar, on account of Mr. Polak's close association with Mr. Gandhi and the Indian community, had assumed that he must be a "coloured person"! It had not occurred to him that any "white person" would venture to offend against the racial conventions that imposed the strictest segregation in social relations. Fortunately, Mr. Gandhi was able to remind the Chief Magistrate that he had met my *fiancé's* father during a short visit to South Africa a couple of years earlier, and he had no difficulty in assuring him that no infringement of the marriage law was contemplated. So, with Mr. Gandhi as our sponsor and with the Chief Magistrate as celebrant, Mr. Polak and I were united in marriage on the footing that we were both "white persons"! We did not know the cause of the delay until later in the day, when Mr. Gandhi laughingly, but gently, broke the news to me.

In the afternoon, the three of us discussed plans for the immediate future. The boys were not attending school but were getting lessons in

a haphazard way, their father usually setting them tasks before he went out in the morning and correcting them in the evening. I therefore undertook to have the boys for three hours every morning, and to give them simple English lessons, reading, writing, arithmetic, composition and elementary grammar. It was decided that my husband and I should remain in the house, at least for the present, taking our part in the family life.

As Mrs. Gandhi did not speak much English, she did not take part in our deliberations, and I saw very little of her the first day. Almost immediately, however, we were thrown alone together, Mr. Gandhi and my husband going to the office, and we soon managed to enjoy some kind of intercourse. In a very short time her English improved, so that later on, (when she had lost some of her reserve with me) and we went out to visit our few European friends, she would take her part in the conversation.

Mr. Gandhi, with a generous hospitality that was second nature to him, was anxious that I should be introduced at an early date to these friends, as well as to the leaders of the Indian community, who had already come to regard my husband with some esteem. It was therefore arranged to give an "at home" the following Saturday, and I was given a free hand to buy some new furniture for the two reception rooms,



as well as to arrange for the refreshments for some fifty guests. There was one servant in the household, a good-natured young Hindu, named Galal, who threw himself heartily into the excitement of preparing for the party. On the Thursday night previously, inspiration came to him, and he asked Mr. Gandhi, in the Gujarati tongue, something to which the latter replied in the affirmative. On Friday, Galal started to carry out his project, which was nothing less than whitewashing the dining-room to make it bright for Saturday's reception. Possibly, my husband's earlier amateur attempts to beautify the room that was to be ours, coupled with the fact that brush, bucket and whitewash were ready to hand, had stirred his imagination and encouraged him to try his skill at a new and untried task. Alas! enthusiasm and skill were ill-matched, for disaster followed the high endeavour. The result of much well-meaning effort was to communicate as much whitewash to a perfectly good wall-paper as to the ceiling.

Mr. Gandhi, upon his return that evening, looked aghast at the mess the room was in. Apparently, he had not taken in the full tenor of poor Galal's suggestion. Shrugging his shoulders philosophically, he sent his ward post-haste for the husband of his late secretary, a builder and decorator, and arranged for the re-papering of the room to be completed by lunch-time on the

following day. But our first guests had already arrived before the furniture had been put into place and, whilst I was busily getting the tables ready, Mr. Gandhi explained the cause of my absence to his friends, who were much amused at the contretemps.

Within a few days we seemed to have all settled in to our new life, which was a very busy one. At 6.30 every morning, all the male members of the household assembled for the grinding of the wheat for the day—all bread being made at home. A rather big hand-mill was fixed in a storeroom for this purpose, and the grinding took from fifteen to thirty minutes each morning. This piece of work was looked upon as a pleasant, if somewhat arduous, morning exercise, apart from its usefulness otherwise. Talk and laughter accompanied the sound of the grinding; for in those days laughter came quite easily to the household. Other exercise took the form of skipping, at which Mr. Gandhi was adept.

. . . . .

After I had been in South Africa for about a couple of months, I was disturbed and puzzled one evening by my husband returning home from the office in a sulky and irritable mood. I hastily went over possibilities in my mind of things that I might have done or not ~~done~~, but I was quickly reassured about myself ~~when~~

I realized that my husband was not speaking to Mr. Gandhi. The dinner hour, usually so cheerful and happy, was a dismal affair. The family were alone that evening, so there was nothing to brighten the clouds that hung over it. As soon as dinner was over, my husband went to our room, where I followed him, wonderingly.

"What is wrong?" I asked. "What has happened to make you so cross?"

He then told me that an article by a well-known South African journalist had been published in a widely-circulated English magazine, making very inaccurate and harmful statements about Indian immigration into and trade in the Transvaal, and that Mr. Gandhi would not take any action in the matter; that, in fact, he refused even to write and refute the most damaging and incorrect statements made by the writer. "And he knows," continued my husband, "he knows quite well the harm such an article will do in England."

I sympathized with my husband, but thought he must be taking an exaggerated view of the matter. If Mr. Gandhi did not think the article of sufficient importance to worry about, why should *he* do so? I was rather new to political life and its bypaths, and quite new to anything approaching a "Race Problem," so that I could not quite see why my husband was making such a fuss about this matter.

The next four days passed thus—four days in which my husband did not address a word to Mr. Gandhi beyond those absolutely necessitated by courtesy or business. In the evening, we sat in our room alone, or walked over the veldt in front of the house.

We were all beginning to feel the atmosphere rather strained. Mrs. Gandhi had asked me:

“What the matter Mr. Polak? What for he cross?”

“He is cross with Bapu,” I replied.

“Bapu” is the Gujarati word for “father,” and it is by this name that he is generally known to his large family, though his colleagues used to call him “Bhai,” or “brother.” My husband is his “Chhotabhai,” or younger brother.

“What for he cross Bapu? What Bapu done?”

“He has not done anything and that is why Henry is cross with him.”

I then tried to explain the matter to her. I had heard so much about it myself during those four days that I did know at least my husband’s thoughts on the subject.

“Oh, oh,” she murmured, when I had finished my recital, not, however, expressing any opinion one way or the other. But a suspicion flitted through my mind that she was not altogether sorry that Mr. Polak was cross with Bapu. She was vexed with him herself sometimes, and the

anger of another person who, she knew, cared very much for him seemed to justify her own.

At last it fretted Mr. Gandhi, and just as we were leaving the dining-room after dinner, he called my husband back.

"I want to speak to you," he said. "Please wait."

As soon as the others had left the room, he began to remonstrate with my husband.

"What is the matter with you? You are sulky and disagreeable!"

"You know quite well what is the matter," my husband replied.

"Anyway, tell me. What are you so angry with me about?"

"Your attitude with regard to N——'s article in the —— *Review*."

"But why should you worry about that?" said Mr. Gandhi soothingly.

"Because it is packed with inaccuracies and you know it!"

"Yes, and since we know they are false, what does it matter?"

"But it does matter," my husband's voice broke in angrily. "It matters very much! You have no right to allow such an article to pass. Other people do not know it is false. How can they, if you do not enlighten them? It is just such statements as these that add to the difficulties and make the Indian position here almost

impossible. It is vitally necessary that they should know the truth, in the interests of the Indian community."

"Well, what do you want me to do?" And Mr. Gandhi's voice sounded quite meek.

"Write and contradict the statements, of course," replied my husband, "giving facts and figures to endorse all you say. You know them better than anyone; you have them at your finger-tips. After all, it's *your* problem!"

"You know them, too," said Mr. Gandhi.

"Of course I do! Anyone could who took the trouble to find out. That is why it is so easy to prove N—— wrong."

There was a pause in the argument. Then, in a bright and cheerful voice, as though a happy solution to a difficult problem had been found, Mr. Gandhi said:

"Well, if you feel so strongly about it, why don't you write the article yourself?"

The storm-clouds were dispersed, the air was clear again. The article was written and published in due course, and it was almost a classic on the subject during the next few months, and became my husband's introduction to public life in India, where it was widely reproduced in the press.

. . . . .

This episode reminds me of another journalistic one that occurred some time before my advent to

South Africa, but which I heard about so often that I soon knew every detail of it. My husband used to take a delight in teasing Mr. Gandhi about it, and the latter, I think, thoroughly enjoyed the joke against himself. It happened, soon after my husband joined Mr. Gandhi and was doing some special work for *Indian Opinion*, that he was asked to go to Pretoria to attend the funeral of President Kruger, and to write a report of it for the paper.

My husband went to the funeral and, on returning home, sat down and wrote what he believed to be an impressive and picturesque article with a pleasant literary touch, of which he was secretly proud. But his pride received a shock when the next number of *Indian Opinion* came into his hands and he saw his article in print. The opening line, "He is dead and is buried!" had seemed to strike the right note to commence with, but to his consternation, he saw his first line in print as follows: "He is dead and is *burned*!" Apart from the error, it seemed an outrage to the memory of Kruger that he should have been consigned to a lurid fate by my husband's paper. Well aware of the propensities of the printer's devil, my husband had extracted a solemn promise from Mr. Gandhi, who was then in Durban, that he would personally revise the proof of the article before publication. He was, therefore, very angry about the matter and wrote

an accusing letter to Mr. Gandhi, asking him how, after his promise to see things through, he had allowed such an error to escape him.

"You know," he wrote, "of the narrow religious beliefs of the Boers, and you will have unnecessarily hurt their susceptibilities by your saying that their President is 'burned.' It is about equal to saying he has gone to hell. I specially asked you to go through the proof carefully, and this is how you have done it!"

Mr. Gandhi was most contrite and expressed very real regret at the error.

"But," he said in explanation, "our people are much more conversant with burning after death than burial, and the compositor (a Hindu) would have quite thought his sentence was the right one; so also would the printer. And though I read it through, I did not notice it, for my mind, too, would have accepted the familiar burning of the body. I will, however, insert a correction in the next issue." This was done and my husband had to make the best of the situation; but he never again asked anyone else to be responsible for the proof-reading of any of his special articles.



## CHAPTER II

Mrs. Gandhi, like most mothers, was proud of and ambitious for her children, and, among other things, she wanted them to be nicely clothed. Apart from her, the household wore European clothes, so that, when new shoes or a new suit was wanted for one of the boys and Mr. Gandhi seemed indifferent to the need, Mrs. Gandhi would often say to me: "You ask Bapu for it," and I did.

Out of these requests many discussions arose between Mr. Gandhi and me as to whether what I asked for was a necessity or not; whether it was right or not for the boys to have English-style suits or Western shoes; and whilst I would urge that the children must have the things to equip them for their time and place, Mr. Gandhi would express very great doubt as to the necessity for these or state that he never wanted the boys to have possessions or to be taught to think of things that might obscure the simple vision of the soul's needs.

With regard to education, we had many earnest discussions. The eldest boy wanted to go to a proper boys' school, and this I talked over with Mr. Gandhi; but he had very little belief in the value of our educational system. He seemed to think that book-knowledge obscured—if, indeed,

it did not destroy—the capacity to perceive the inner vision. I would argue against this theory, saying that the cultivation of any faculty we possessed should help us to come to a fuller comprehension of Divine things.

“Do not confuse the promptings of your mind with the feeling of your heart,” he once said in reply to one of my arguments. “‘Seek ye first the Kingdom of God,’ you are told, and also that ‘The Kingdom of God is within you.’ Why, then, cover Him up by extraneous thoughts and things?”

“I do not want to cover Him up,” I replied, “but I want to understand Him.”

“That is your Western mentality getting in the way of your real vision. You have an Eastern heart, but I am afraid a Western mind, and the two will clash. You have no need to go to books to find God, you can find Him within yourself.”

. . . . .

I have said before that the dinner-hour in this busy little household was nearly always a very happy one. It would be the first time in the day that the family met together, and as, more often than not, some guests were present, ten to fourteen people sat down to a meal every evening.

The dinner would consist of two courses, and, the appointments of the table being very simple, no one waited on us. Various kinds of vegetable

dishes were served as the first course, accompanied by a kind of lentil dish, hard-baked wholemeal bread and nut butter, and various little dishes of raw salad would be on the table. The second course would be a milk dish and raw fruit. After this, a kind of cereal coffee or lemonade, hot or cold according to season, would be served, and that completed the meal. It was never a hurried one, and more than an hour would be spent at the table, the time being occupied often by serious discussions. More often, however, dinner-time was passed in light conversation, jest and wit playing a big part in it. In those early years, Mr. Gandhi had a fine sense of humour and would laugh most heartily at any amusing story.

On one occasion, some Europeans had invited themselves to dinner. Mr. Gandhi did not know them very well and Mrs. Gandhi not at all. When they arrived, they were frankly and almost rudely curious about the home-life, asking all kinds of intimate questions in a very arrogant manner. Mr. Gandhi answered quite kindly, but laughed at many of the statements about what they thought Indian people did or did not do. Mrs. Gandhi had, from the first, been angry about them, and before we went to the dining-room she disappeared. Mr. Gandhi sent for her, but she did not come. Eventually, Mr. Gandhi went himself in search of his wife, and found her in her room, but she refused to come down. The

dinner passed off, Mr. Gandhi giving some explanation for his wife's absence. The next day when I saw her, she told me that she would not have people come to the house just for idle curiosity and to "make laugh" of her and her home. So that, if they came, they would not see her. Bapu could see them himself. I think Mr. Gandhi tried to reason her out of this mood, but she stuck to her opinion and was not moved by any of our arguments.

An amusing little incident occurred on another evening, one that made a big impression upon all those concerned in it, and that showed Mr. Gandhi's method of dealing with young people and the way he believed of teaching them self-control.

One of the children was inclined to be, as so many small boys are, rather greedy. Of the dishes he liked most, he would keep asking for more and more, and when checked would be sulky or rebellious. Mr. Gandhi had tried reasoning with him, but the child was only a tiny boy and his father's reasoning made no impression upon his appetite. At last, one evening, Bapu told him that he could have as much as ever he wished to eat and that no one should stop him or check him. The meal proceeded, the child sitting at table in his usual way, and having eaten all he could, he laid his head upon the table and fell asleep. The table, however, was not cleared even

though all of us had finished, and presently the child woke up again. Mr. Gandhi asked him if he wanted anything more. He replied in the affirmative and recommenced eating. We still sat at the table, not hurrying the child in any way, but talking of many things. Eventually, the little fellow could not swallow any more, and being more than filled to repletion, he commenced to cry. Mr. Gandhi took no notice of him, and when Mrs. Gandhi wanted to attend to the child, he prevented it. The child cried quietly for a little while, and tried to go to sleep again, but he grew more and more uncomfortable, and eventually had to be carried from the room. This Mr. Gandhi did quite tenderly, taking him in his arms and carrying him upstairs to bed, where his mother took him in charge. Most of the night he was unwell, but the lesson was never forgotten, and the child never again worried to be given things to eat that were refused him.

After dinner, if no strangers were present, we used to sit together whilst Mr. Gandhi or one of his wards intoned a couple of *slokas* or verses from the *Bhagavad Gita*, whilst my husband would read the English equivalent from Arnold's beautiful *Song Celestial*. Mr. Gandhi explained the difficult passages to us and general discussion followed. Sometimes my husband and I had a lesson in Gujarati from him. When guests were present, philosophies of different countries would

be compared and many varieties of religious and mystic experience dwelt upon. One never-failing theme was the different customs of East and West, and the different outlook upon life that various races of the world exemplified. In such discussions practically all present joined and everyone would be listened to equally.

Another incident worthy of recording occurred about this time. An Englishman, who had joined Mr. Gandhi in his Phoenix scheme (of which more later), had left Phoenix and returned to Johannesburg. He was full of bitter complaints at the treatment he had received. As it was possible that I, too, should be going to Phoenix at some future time, when Mr. B—— came to “have it out” with Mr. Gandhi, I was invited to be in the room with them. Mr. B—— abused Mr. Gandhi and his fellow-countrymen without reserve, walking up and down the room one side of the table and Mr. Gandhi walking up and down on the other side. I did not believe that half the things Mr. B—— said could be true; they sounded so inhuman and shocking. When he said that during an attack of fever he had been utterly neglected by the other members of the community, that he had been left lying on his bed alone and ill, with no one to do anything for him, not even to bring him a glass of water, Mr. Gandhi said: “I do not think that is quite correct; there were S—— and C——; they surely

came to help you? Besides, I know that W—— went two or three times a day to you." "No," shouted Mr. B——, "they did not, they left me all alone; for days no one came near me. I have finished with it all and with them."

Mr. Gandhi tried to reason with Mr. B——, telling him, as I afterwards learnt was true, that he was not fully conscious for a few days and that everyone had helped to look after him and assist him back to health. He further told him that his present black outlook upon his fellows was partly physical, even now he had not properly recovered, and when he was well again he would see life differently once more and take a more kindly view of his fellows. Mr. B——, however, refused to be reasoned with or listen to "suave" explanations from Mr. Gandhi. So the two parted with, on the one side, a feeling of burning resentment and, on the other, a sadness that a respected colleague had forsaken him and was nursing within himself a sense of disillusionment and grievance.

After Mr. B—— had gone, Mr. Gandhi, who looked very tired and thoughtful, turned to me and said: "You have now heard what Mr. B—— thinks about Phoenix and us."

"It cannot possibly be as bad as he has said," I replied. "I cannot believe that amongst the Europeans and Indians there, no one attended to a man who was ill in bed. I cannot believe that

any people behave as callously and badly as Mr. B—— says they did.”

“I am afraid he is still a sick man, and sick men are not entirely responsible for what they say,” Mr. Gandhi replied.

“But how painful for you to have to listen for nearly three hours to such charges and complaints,” I said. “It was all most unpleasant.”

This incident must have made a deeper impression upon me than I knew at the time of its happening, for when later on I went myself to Phoenix, I started life there with a subconscious fear of it, that probably prevented my being as happy there as I might otherwise have been.



### CHAPTER III

"Is Mr. Gandhi a Christian?" a visitor to my first home in Johannesburg once asked me.

"Do you mean one who is converted to Christianity," I replied, "or one who believes in the teaching of Christ?"

"One who has been what we call converted," she said. "I thought, and I have heard it said, that Mr. Gandhi was born a Christian. Is that so?"

"Oh, no!" I said emphatically, "I know he was not born a Christian, nor has he been admitted to the Christian Church. But why do you ask this question?"

"I was talking about him with some friends the other day, and we were wondering how it is he knows the Christian Scriptures so well, and seems to be fond of quoting the words of Christ. My friends thought he must be a Christian."

After she had gone, I thought over what my visitor had said. It was quite true; Mr. Gandhi very frequently quoted the sayings and teachings of Jesus. The lesson of the "Sermon on the Mount" seemed to be constantly in his mind, and was a source of guidance and inspiration to him. I had not thought it strange that this was so, for I had been so accustomed, in my home-life in England, to hear frequent quotations from

the Scriptures that it seemed a normal part of life, and I had not hitherto realized that it might appear strange to hear the sayings of Jesus fall from the lips of a Hindu. I went over a number of things in my mind, and thought of Mr. Gandhi's office in town. I recalled the beautiful head of Christ that adorned the wall over his desk. When I noticed it the first time, I had said to him: "How beautiful that is!"

"Yes," he replied, looking up to it; "I love to have it there. I see it each time I raise my eyes from my desk. It is, indeed, beautiful!"

I remembered there was no picture of the Buddha or of Krishna in the office, and only three other pictures were to be seen on the walls. I learned some details about them later. One was of Justice Ranade, the great Indian social reformer. Another was of Mrs. Besant, ever eager to defend the downtrodden and to denounce injustice. The third picture was of Sir William Wilson Hunter, editor of the *Imperial Gazetteer of India*, who had written very strongly in *The Times* against the system of Indian indentured labour, which he had described as "semi-slavery." At home was a large photograph of Dadabhai Naoroji, who was, in his day, known as the "Grand Old Man of India." It was he who, with a handful of friends, European and Indian, founded the Indian National Congress. I met him in his old age in

London, and, later still, I visited him in the quietude of his retirement at his Indian home at Versova. I am thinking, to-day, that even he, progressive and far-seeing patriot as he was, could not have foreseen what a tremendous instrument in India's destiny the Congress was to become. Nor, I am sure, could Mr. Gandhi have then had even a dim vision that he would be called to be its leader when it had grown to number its adherents by the hundred thousand. Who could then have dreamed that Mr. Gandhi would have played David to Dadabhai Naoroji's Saul? All these photographs portrayed those who were fighting for the liberation of the oppressed and so were dear to Mr. Gandhi's heart; but in the centre of his room, dominating it, gazing calmly down upon him as he sat and worked at his desk, was the face of Christ.

When Mr. Gandhi came home that evening, I told him of my visitor and the conversation that had taken place.

He smiled. "I did once seriously think of embracing the Christian faith," he said. "The gentle figure of Christ, so patient, so kind, so loving, so full of forgiveness that he taught His followers not to retaliate when abused or struck, but to turn the other cheek—I thought it was a beautiful example of the perfect man."

"But you did not embrace Christianity, did you?" I asked.

"No," he replied thoughtfully. "I studied your Scriptures for some time and thought earnestly about them. I was tremendously attracted to Christianity; but eventually I came to the conclusion that there was nothing really in your Scriptures that we had not got in ours, and that to be a good Hindu also meant that I would be a good Christian. There was no need for me to join your creed to be a believer in the beauty of the teachings of Jesus or to try to follow His example."

I thought how sincerely Mr. Gandhi was trying to follow the example of Jesus and knew that what he said was true.

"Of course," I said, "it is what a man is that counts, not what he calls himself. But tell me, do you believe in conversion, in changing from one form of faith to another?"

"What do you yourself feel?" he asked.

"It does not please me, somehow. I could not do it," I said in reply.

"I think that is right. If a man reaches the heart of his own religion, he has reached the heart of the others too. There is only one God, but there are many paths to Him."

"If Karma and reincarnation be true," I said, after a pause, "we are born into the faith to which we belong, and the one most suitable at the moment for our development. So we should not change."

"What do you think is the essential lesson for man in the teaching of Christianity?" he continued.

"I could think of two or three; but the one that stands out strongest in my mind at the moment is *Love*, which is expressed in the words, 'One is your Master, Christ, and all ye are brethren.'"

"Yes," replied Mr. Gandhi, "and Hinduism teaches the same great truth, and Moham-  
medanism and Zoroastrianism, too."

I thought of the stories I had read and heard about the caste system in India, and I had doubts as to the association of Hinduism and brotherhood. Then after a pause, I said:

"Do you think Hinduism does teach 'all men are brothers' as Christianity does?"

"Do not take men's imperfect interpretation, as you see it, for the real teaching of any great faith. You would not suggest to me that the Christian world lives as brothers, would you? Think of its wars, its hatreds, its poverty and its crime!"

"That is true. I suppose the ideals of mankind are always far ahead of them, and men and women are very much the same in whatever part of the world you find them."

"If we realized our ideals, they would cease to be ideals. We should have nothing to strive for," he concluded.

A picture rises before me. My husband and I were seeing Mr. Gandhi off at the Johannesburg railway station, probably to interview General Smuts on some serious occasion. He had been giving my husband final instructions about some important matters then pending. Just as the train was about to leave I turned to him and said: "Is there anything special I can do?" "Yes," he replied with quiet earnestness. "Pray for me!" He had always an immense belief in the efficacy of devout prayer, and the prayers of a woman, he sometimes thought, were the most unselfish of all.

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Often Mr. Gandhi would speak of the value of the Hindu divisions of life: the period of early childhood—a time for play and carelessness, just a period of growth in the loving care of parents and the sunshine of life; then the student period, when thought begins to gain ascendancy over the growing physical being; then the period of the householder, with the burden and responsibility of the family, the care of wife and children occupying all his mature strength; finally, having served his period of stress, came the time when he might retire from the world and its perplexities, its cares and labours, and, going into the silence for meditation and thought, he could accustom his eyes to behold the soul of life and his own self. "Yes," I once said, in reply to such

a dissertation, "that is all very well. I admit it sounds right and beautiful; but what is the position of the woman? Where does she come in, in this last period? She never seems to reach a point in Hindu thought where she can lay aside the care of external things and devote herself to the life of the spirit and so prepare her soul for the hereafter."

"Oh," replied Mr. Gandhi, raising his hand and pointing a finger, a favourite habit of his in those days, "you have missed the beauty of it. She has no need to retire to the jungle, or to leave life to contemplate God. She sees Him always. She has no need of any other school to prepare her for Heaven than marriage to a man and the care of her children."

"Yes," again I interjected, "but she may not have chosen to bear the physical burden while the man may sit in quiet contemplation or commune with his soul. Why should she not also have a period of contemplation? Man made such rules for himself; why did he leave her out?"

"Because there was not any need for her," smilingly replied Mr. Gandhi. I acquiesced, but was not convinced.

On yet another occasion the position of woman was under discussion, and Mr. Gandhi had said that the East had given her a higher position than she had been given in the West.

"I do not see that," I said. "The East has

made her the subject of man. She seems to possess no individual life."

"You are mistaken," Mr. Gandhi replied. "The East has given her a position of worship. Have you not heard the story of Satyavan and Savitri, and how, when Satyavan died, Savitri wrestled with the God of Death for the return of her beloved? She had a hard battle to fight, showed the highest courage, fortitude, love and wisdom, and eventually, after many dangers, won him back to her side."

"But that seems to me just the point," I urged. "In your mythology, woman is made to serve man, even to wrestling with the God of Death for him. In ours, or at least in the great classic that we love, it was Orpheus, the man, who fought for Eurydice, the woman, and won. It was he who served and saved her, and that ideal has persisted ever since. He may have expressed it badly, but it is the Western ideal nevertheless."

"And do you," interrogated Mr. Gandhi, "think that it is giving to woman a lower or subordinate place in life when it is she who is depicted as the greatest of conquerors, when she is worshipped as the preserver?"

"That is beautiful in theory, I admit," I replied, "but I do not find her worshipped; I find her always waiting on the pleasure of some man."

"Isn't that because you have not yet under-



stood?" replied Mr. Gandhi. "In the great things of life she is man's equal or superior. In the lesser things she may serve him, but is it not a privilege of the great to serve the least?"

"But do men think like that?" I asked. "Does a man really think that his wife is at least his equal, when custom requires her to stand behind his chair while he sits and eats?"

"Do not mistake appearance for reality," Mr. Gandhi smilingly replied. "Men have not reached the ideal yet, but nearly all know it in their hearts."

## CHAPTER IV

This period of comparative domestic peace of the little household did not, however, last long. About four months after my arrival in Johannesburg Mr. Gandhi decided to give up the house and adopt a simpler method of life for the family. This coincided with his wish to go to Phoenix and develop the little settlement there. Accordingly, the house was given up, some of the furniture sold, some packed for Durban and some kept in store. I accompanied the family to Durban, leaving my husband to complete the vacation of the house and follow in about a week's time.

Phoenix was an estate that had come into Mr. Gandhi's hands about a year previously to my arrival in South Africa. It comprised about a hundred acres of fertile land and was situated about fourteen miles from Durban, in the midst, at the time, of the sugar-cultivated lands of the north coast of Natal. Here a colony had been established on Tolstoyan principles. The original members, who had been induced by Mr. Gandhi to become pioneer settlers, comprised a small group of Indian and European idealists who intended to work together and put their ideals into working practice. Here had been set up the printing press where *Indian Opinion* was printed, published and dispatched to various parts of

South Africa and overseas, and where it was hoped that a printing and publishing business could be successfully run. The colony was to be as much as possible self-supporting, and life's material requirements were to be reduced to a minimum. Each member or householder of the community was to have two acres of land for his own use and cultivation and a simple house to live in. Should any member vacate his house or holding, it could not be sold, but was to be passed on to another member.

There was to be a school organized on very simple lines, where pupils should be taught elementary school subjects, but where the main teaching should be for the purpose of character-building and to find God in natural beauty and in their own inner selves. No dogmas of any kind were to be taught, and even the few set subjects were to be sufficiently elastic to allow for complete individual freedom.

There was also to be a house of healing, where only so-called "natural" means of healing were to be resorted to. Rest and pure air, fasting and a cleansing of the internal organism of the body by water, steam baths, sun treatment and mud packs, and, of most importance, the getting away from the fret and wear of things to the calm contemplation of peace and beauty—these were the methods and agencies that it was hoped to employ for the curing of body, mind and spirit.

Beyond the settlement no buildings were to be seen except a few small Zulu farm-huts and the houses of a Native mission college, about two miles away, run by Zulus themselves. Between the settlement and the railway station was a big sugar estate covering thousands of acres, but sugar later on gave way to wattle, and the latter formed a pleasant shade to the travellers on a hot day to and from the station and the colony. Apart from one miserable nondescript little general store, a few minutes from the railway station, there was no shopping convenience, and all goods had to be procured from Durban, fresh table commodities being almost unknown to the early settlers. Even butter was bought in a tin, and was often simply oil by the time it reached Phoenix.

There were about eight dwellings of a bungalow type on the settlement. These were built of corrugated iron, with rough wooden supports and no inner lining. Mr. Gandhi's bungalow was no different from the others, except that it was a little larger. It consisted of a large room, which was living- and dining-room, two small bedrooms, another small room as kitchen and a lean-to structure for bathroom. The fittings of the bathroom were primitive but ingenious; a good-sized hole was made in the iron roof, an ordinary garden watering-can was balanced on a piece of wood, and to the can was attached a piece of cord.

After the can was filled with water and fixed in its place one could get a good imitation shower-bath by standing under the hole and pulling the cord. On the roof of Mr. Gandhi's bungalow, which was flat, a simple kind of adjustable wind-screen was fixed up, and this served to shield the roof-sleepers from the prevalent wind at any time. The roof was reached by a ladder-like stairway, and was practically always used by Mr. Gandhi and the boys during the dry season for a sleeping-place.

Sanitary arrangements on the estate were equally primitive, each bungalow having its own little shelter, where a bucket system was installed, and each householder was responsible, personally, for the emptying of the bucket at a recognized place set aside for that purpose. Later, Mr. Gandhi devised a somewhat more elaborate and very satisfactory system which, I believe, he has employed on a larger scale at his Ashram in Sabarmati. Indeed, one of his cherished rôles has always been that of a super-scavenger!

My first view of Phoenix disappointed and depressed me. Mrs. Gandhi, too, did not feel happy at being transplanted from the town, with its domestic and human amenities, to the more primitive conditions which prevailed at the settlement. She and I shared a little room the first night we arrived, and lay awake talking and

grumbling for hours. We were probably overtired, both nervously and physically; for we had had two days and a night in a train, and at the end of that a long two-mile tramp along a badly constructed road across difficult country, our path lighted only by a flickering lamp, and the fear of snakes constantly in our minds. The youngest boy also had become tired and commenced to cry miserably. When we reached our destination, we had to set to work to make beds ready, and all the arrangements for the night.

About four o'clock in the morning, just when it was getting daylight, Mr. Gandhi came down the ladder and walked up and down outside our room. After a time, knowing that we were only dozing, he spoke and asked what it was we really wanted. His voice had a worried note, and it was evident that our attitude of the previous night had much disturbed him. Mrs. Gandhi replied in Gujarati, and a conversation ensued which I could not understand. Eventually, Mr. Gandhi begged us to be patient and see what we could do with the things around us, promising to get any other really necessary things that we required. The essence of the last sentence lay in the word "necessary," however, for so many things we desired we could not prove to be necessary, and so life was lived at Phoenix in a very simple way.

One day Mrs. Gandhi and I, Mr. Gandhi and my husband were invited to a small party at a middle-class Mohammedan house in Durban, where (one of the few cases I ever met with) there were two wives and where the ladies observed purdah. Our host had arranged that, as an Englishwoman, I should be privileged to join the men, but my husband and Mr. Gandhi teasingly said my place was with the women and to that place I went. When, three hours later, we left the house, I showed annoyance at having been bored, for no one, apart from Mrs. Gandhi, spoke a word of English, and I had sat alone most of the time. Mr. Gandhi teased me about it, but led me to wonder if I had not really learned more by being shut up with a few ladies, even though they did not speak my tongue, than if I had been with the men. When I thought of it afterwards, I had to admit that I had seen a household, not at all rich, where two women of mature years, intelligent if not highly educated, lived in harmony as the wives of one husband. It was my first introduction to polygamy, and I could not say that it was unhappy for those living under the system, if this were a typical example of it.

On another occasion I had been asked to tea by a European lady that I had met somewhere by chance. Mr. Gandhi talked the invitation over with my husband, and I wondered why such a fuss was being made about it, and said so. Then

I learned that she had, only a few months previously, been divorced, and Mr. Gandhi, while not wanting to spread gossip, yet thought I could not accept the offer unless I was told of the lady's past, and even then he was not at all sure that he liked the idea of my visiting her house, as the scandal that had not yet died out might injure me. He had doubts himself as to whether he should recognize her, for his views on the sanctity of marriage were most rigid, and he regarded divorce as an abhorrence. But, as usual, in practice, his fine humanity rose uppermost.

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The paper *Indian Opinion* was published weekly, and when publishing-day came, every hand was called to the work. Mr. Gandhi and my husband would be busy writing or correcting last-minute articles or material for the paper. The printers would be busy on their job, and those of us who could not do any other special work were occupied in folding and wrapping the papers as they came from the machines.

The printing-press, at this time, had no mechanical means at its disposal, for the oil-engine had broken down, and at first animal power was utilized, two donkeys being used to turn the handle of the machine. But Mr. Gandhi, ever a believer in man doing his own work, soon altered this, and four hefty Zulu girls were pro-



cured for a few hours on printing day. These took the work in turns, two at a time, while the other two rested; but every male able-bodied settler, Mr. Gandhi included, took his turn at the handle, and thus the copies of the paper were "ground out."

It was indeed a busy and happy band of workers at the machine. Everyone seemed to feel a quiet excitement in getting the paper out to time, and however late we all worked, no one grumbled or felt aggrieved. Seldom were the last papers finished and folded before midnight and often much later. Then we would all troop off in a body to the main house, accompanying Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi to their door, where good-nights would be exchanged, and each would go his own way absolutely tired out, but content.

## CHAPTER

The ideals and theories that had sounded so right and reasonable in the study, or read so well in books, had a chance of being put to the test at Phoenix, and, as might be expected, were often found impracticable when applied to the hard facts of life. Problems arose that had not been taken into account, and many very trying, but nevertheless often amusing, incidents were the result.

One very early problem arose from the fundamental rule that, there being no private ownership of land at Phoenix, no land was fenced in. Paths and narrow roads divided one holding from another, and each man knew his own boundary-line. Every man also tilled his own land and planted or sowed the produce most desired. The Zulus of the surrounding country could be trusted not to steal or damage the growing crops, and kitchen-gardening promised well. But humans were not the only inhabitants of the neighbourhood. Some Native farmers on the land adjoining the settlement were the possessors of some mules and donkeys. These were not stabled at night-time, nor was the land on which they lived fenced in, and as the animals were allowed to run loose, the Phoenix plots became the scene of ~~luxury~~ meals for the untethered quadrupeds. As soon as

carrots and other succulent vegetables made their appearance above ground, the mules and donkeys found them out, and trampled down what they did not eat up. This destruction of growing crops was a much greater trial than appears on the surface. Each settler had only a tiny monthly allowance for his or his family's needs, and to grow his own vegetable produce, apart from its being laid down as a rule for the community, was a necessity. Mr. Gandhi was consulted, and someone went to the owners of the animals and remonstrated with them (the owners, I mean). This produced very little result at first, and further remonstrance was resorted to. One or two members put tall sticks up round about their vegetable plots, and the children used to drive away from the estate any animal found straying on it, so in time a certain immunity was obtained. But the land remained without proper fencing, and some of the amateur farmers began to lose heart. Later on, some alterations were made in farming the estate, but many other awkward things had happened and inconveniences suffered ere that day arrived.

Another trial was the water-supply, especially that of drinking-water. This was collected from the roofs of the buildings during the rains and stored in big water-butts. When the dry weather, which lasted several months in a year, had continued for some time, the drinking-water had to

be most sparingly used. No waste was permitted of any kind, and the water-butts were anxiously examined from time to time to see how the supply stood. The Zulus seemed to be able to consume what the new-comers would call impure water, and suffered no ill-effects from it. Nevertheless, they liked the clearer water that Phoenix collected, and, when passing along the road nearby, would often come to one or other of the houses and beg for a cup of water. To refuse such a simple request seemed cruel and, in addition, contrary to the belief that "all men are brothers in the sight of the Father and entitled to share equally in His gifts." But to give five to ten cups of water a day would have soon emptied the butts long before the new rain-supply could be hoped for. Mr. Gandhi, realizing the difficulty of the water-problem, had had hopes for some time of being able to have a well dug. This, however, was never done. Money was always too scarce to enable the well to be dug, and so the problem of giving to the thirsty Zulu wayfarer a cup of water had to be dealt with by each householder, and much heart-searching and real unhappiness was caused by the necessity of refusing the simple request.

Fortunately, for washing and bathing purposes, a fair stream ran near the boundary of the estate, and from this the household water had to be fetched daily. The boys and some of the men

used to go direct to the stream for their daily bath.

This stream became the scene of an important incident. Just suspended from an overhanging bough of a tree at the spot where water was fetched daily, there was one day observed a big green mamba, one of the deadliest snakes found in South Africa. The colonist who first saw it did not know what to do. Non-killing was a fundamental principle in Phoenix; but no one could argue or reason with a snake, and the snake seemed absolutely disinclined to go away. Besides, as one snake never lives alone, no one knew how many more might come and take up residence there. Eventually, an Indian colonist settled the problem for himself and the others. He was not a vegetarian but an old hand at the gun, which he fetched, and then shot the snake and kept vigil at intervals for the next two or three days so as to dispose of any others that should come along. He was himself the father of two little girls, and believed that the safety and life of the children were of greater importance than those of a snake. I do not think Mr. Gandhi complained to Mr. S—— of his action, nor did anyone else. But all of us thought about it, and some of us secretly believed Mr. S—— to be quite right and wanted to thank him for having taken prompt and effective action. This incident, however, was not allowed to be used as a precedent

for other things, and the unwritten law at Phoenix continued to be the sacredness of all life.

In this connection, Mr. Gandhi would tell us stories, from Indian sources, of good and wise men living side by side with all manner of wild and so-called dangerous creatures, and coming to no harm by them. On one occasion, when I was present, he reminded one of the Indian settlers of the fact that in many households in India a saucer of milk is placed for the snakes of the neighbourhood by the head woman of the family, and that the children could rejoice accordingly in immunity from attack by the snake. The snake and the children thus having no fear of the other, all were safe.

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Another snake incident which occurred much later in the life of Phoenix is worthy of repetition here, as it points to the deep influence such teaching had upon many who came into close contact with Mr. Gandhi. A member who joined the settlement after my first visit there was a European of the hunting, flesh-eating type, accustomed to defending himself in the usual way while living and travelling alone in the less-known parts of Africa. At the time that this man, Mr. C——, met Mr. Gandhi, he must have been about forty, and was seeking for a higher explanation and rule of life than that of the jungle.

I do not know whether he had heard of Mr. Gandhi's experiment at Phoenix ere he met him. But soon after the meeting in Johannesburg, he severed himself from the life that he had been accustomed to and joined the Phoenix settlement. He lived, as the other members of the little colony did, in a very simple bungalow, doing his own household work, assisting in the life of the colony, meditating and studying.

One day, on going to his shed to fetch his bicycle, he saw two green mambas coiled up quite near it. Just before observing them, he must have disturbed them, for already they were commencing to lift their heads. He stood still and watched them uncurl themselves. The shed was a small and narrow one, and was too full of things to allow much room for him to move about to avoid the reptiles or even to get out of the door, as he would have had to pass close in front of them to do so. He also realized that to go out of the shed and leave the snakes in possession of it would not solve the difficulty, as he wanted the bicycle at once. He was due in Durban, a fourteen-mile run, very shortly. His first real conscious thought was a most natural one: to look for an implement to kill the snakes with; but before he attempted to put thought into action, he remembered his new faith, and determined to put himself to a severe test. He said to himself: "Love overcometh all things, and man should fear

nothing that God has created." So he endeavoured to hold his mind calm, to eradicate from it, not only any sense of fear, but also of antipathy and dislike. Slowly he went towards the door and, having reached it, stood quietly up against the supporting post. The snakes, by now fully awake and alert, commenced to move. First one looked around, then glided towards Mr. C—— and the door. But Mr. C—— stood firm. He neither moved nor allowed his mind to falter. The snake glided close to him, passed him, and went out into the open. The second snake followed the first, after turning its head to the right and to the left, then coming close up to Mr. C——, almost touching him, as it, too, passed out through the open door, leaving Mr. C—— quite unharmed. We all soon heard the story and were tremendously impressed by it, but I never heard of anyone else there repeating the experiment. Years afterwards, however, I understand, Mr. Gandhi himself calmly allowed a deadly snake to crawl over his legs on its way to safety.

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Mr. C—— was also the central figure in another interesting episode at Phoenix. He allowed two horrible spiders, big, red, hairy and rather poisonous creatures, to build their home (this variety builds a web-like nest, and with its legs outstretched is about as large as a coffee saucer)



near the head of his bed. There he trained himself to sleep comfortably and undisturbed, thus proving his own strength of will, Mr. Gandhi's teaching, and his own faith in the principle of love being the preserver of life. After remaining at Phoenix some time, Mr. C—— left South Africa to continue his humanitarian work and teaching in Europe.

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Often, when discussions took place with Mr. Gandhi as to the relative values of human and animal life, I would argue that human life was the highest form of life evolved on the earth, and ought, therefore, to be preserved, and that if the question arose of human life versus animal, the animal had to go for the preservation of the human.

"But why should you think that human life is of more importance to God than animal?" Mr. Gandhi once countered.

"Because human life is higher in the scale of evolution. Man, at least, can think about God, which an animal cannot, and that gives him a higher and more important place."

"Yet many men behave worse than the brutes of the field. They are more cruel, for they enjoy their cruelty. Animals will only kill for food; but man will torture his fellow-man in addition to killing him," urged Mr. Gandhi.

"I know all that," I said. "But I still maintain that mankind is of higher value in the scheme of creation than the animal, and man ought not to be destroyed to enable the animal to survive."

"But why must they destroy each other? Is not the earth big enough to hold them both, side by side?"

"In many cases, no," I replied; "some creatures breed so quickly that, unless they were destroyed, mankind could not survive. Take, for example, Australia and the rabbit problem."

Mr. Gandhi, however, never agreed with such an argument, and would supply numbers of stories from Indian legend to substantiate the theory that animals, even the fiercest and deadliest, should and could live side by side with man, and neither suffer injury from the other. I believe he has since had to face (though he has not solved) a similar problem to the Australian one in the depredations of the monkeys at his Ashram in India.

On another occasion we were discussing what our duty would be if we were placed in the position of being in charge of a human being who was quite unable to defend himself, and who was in certain danger of being killed and devoured by a hungry animal. Mr. Gandhi said that if such an occasion occurred, and the man in danger of death chose to give his life for the hungry animal,

as the Buddha had done, it was the highest form of sacrifice and the most divine.

"But," I said, "supposing the man does not want to sacrifice himself for the animal, and I could preserve him by killing the animal? I know this, that however beautiful in theory the story of the Buddha is, if the life of someone I loved or was responsible for was in danger through a wild animal, I should pray for wisdom and strength to destroy the animal so as to protect my charge. And were I successful, I should return thanks to God who had nerved and armed me for the struggle."

Mr. Gandhi smiled, and said: "Yes, I believe you would. To every man his own duty, and as long as you think like that, you are right to act in such a way."

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Another subject of discussion, I might almost say of contention, between us was the right of the head of the household to absolute control over the members of it. I would not allow that the husband or father had any rights over the life of wife or child. One such argument arose over the story of Abraham offering his son as a sacrifice to the Lord. Mr. Gandhi had spoken of it with great feeling and approbation.

"But that is not the man's sacrifice," I said, somewhat impatiently. "It is the son's, to say

nothing of the wife and mother. If a man offers himself as a sacrifice, that is, perhaps, his affair; but he may not offer another, not even his child. He has no such right over it. The child is his to protect, not to destroy."

"Yet," said Mr. Gandhi, "the story is part of your own Scripture. God called upon Abraham to offer his son."

"Yes," I replied, "I know it is; but I do not believe God called upon Abraham to kill Isaac as an offering to Him. I believe that was man's interpretation of his own idea of God. Each human soul is responsible to God for itself, and not even a father has the right to injure the life he has called into being. The child's life does not belong to the father to destroy, and for man to take credit to himself for attempting to destroy his child is to me barbaric. I grow angry and terribly hurt at such a monstrous ideal!"

"Then you do not accept your Scripture?" said Mr. Gandhi, enquiringly.

"The story may be a true account of an event, but I do not believe God meant Abraham to kill Isaac."

"God did not permit him to," Mr. Gandhi quietly interrupted, "and was not the whole beauty of the story in the test of Abraham's love and belief in the Lord, so that even his beloved son he was willing to give to his God when it was asked of him?"

"I know that is meant to be the lesson, and the lesson, I believe, I can appreciate. But I cannot appreciate man's belief in his right of life and death over wife or child, and no mention is made of what Isaac thought about it, or Isaac's mother. It is only *Abraham's* sacrifice that counts."

Mr. Gandhi shook his head. "You are missing the beauty of it," he said. "Whether Isaac had agreed or not to be sacrificed, it would not have lessened the father's pain in sacrificing his child. So that, anyway, it was Abraham's agony and faith that mattered, and that is why the story is told as though it mainly concerns him."

## CHAPTER VI

The peaceful development of the little Colony was soon disturbed. After a very few weeks of my stay at Phoenix the Natal Native rebellion broke out and a great deal of unrest was felt by us all. Although there was nothing to be feared from our Zulu neighbours, yet the knowledge that only a few miles away was a big rebel encampment, and that our own soldiers were being sent forward in ever-increasing numbers to deal with the trouble, began to affect most of us.

I am reminded here of a somewhat humorous; if rather grim, happening just before I left Johannesburg. It was told me by one of my few English women-friends as having occurred to her. Trouble among the Zulus was brewing and it was affecting the Johannesburg "house-boys," most of whom were Zulu tribesmen from Natal. It was a time of anxiety, and many white women, left alone during the day with their Native servants, secretly learnt the use of fire-arms for self-defence in case of need. Fortunately, the need never arose in the Transvaal.

My friend had had a "kitchen-boy," named Tom, for many years. From time to time he had returned to his kraal, with his savings, doubtless used to provide himself with another wife, but he had always come back at the proper time to

render further loyal and faithful service. He was devoted to my friend and she had developed a sincere liking and regard for him.

One day, hearing a rumour that the Johannesburg "house-boys" were about to rise against and massacre their employers, she said to him, half in jest, half in earnest: "If the 'boys' make trouble, Tom wouldn't hurt Missis, would you?"

"No," said Tom, with deep-toned conviction. "Tom kill next-door Missis. Next door 'boy' kill this Missis!"

With which consolation my friend nearly collapsed. Mr. Gandhi was much amused when he later heard this story; but the event assumed quite different proportions in the eyes of my friend at the time.

To resume. Mr. Gandhi made an offer to the Government to take a stretcher-bearer company to the scene of action, and though the offer was not accepted at the time, the knowledge that at any moment he might be called away added to the feeling of unrest in the community.

As soon as my husband had come down from Johannesburg, we had had a little house arranged for us for a home of our own. It was rather on the outskirts of the settlement, a little two-roomed wood-and-iron shack, practically empty of furniture. Here I tried to make a little home, the first of my married life. But the impossibility of getting suitable food, the knowledge and fear of the

snakes, spiders and other poisonous or unpleasant creatures, the disappointment to me, a town-bred girl, of the whole place, and, lastly, the rebellion, proved too much for me. I could not sleep, and would lie awake nearly all night, watching for insects and crawling creatures and listening in imagination to the reports of guns and the shrieks of people dying. Mr. Gandhi talked the matter of our continuing at Phoenix over with me, and decided that it was wiser for my husband to take me into Durban, at least for the present. Arrangements were accordingly made and I left Phoenix one morning to take up life in Durban, travelling down in the train with a man in khaki, who said he had Bambaata's head in a sack that was beside him. As there was a price on the Zulu leader's head, I believed the story. But whether it was really true or not I do not know. My husband continued to go to Phoenix several days a week to continue his editorial work for *Indian Opinion*, and I sometimes accompanied him.

Soon after we left Phoenix, Mr. Gandhi's offer of a stretcher-bearer company was accepted, and he left for the front with a small contingent of his countrymen that he had himself collected together and whom he had instructed in their duties. Mrs. Gandhi was naturally rather worried at this new step in her husband's life. But he was not away long. The rebellion was soon over, and Mr. Gandhi returned to Phoenix, but not to stay.



Events in the Indian community in the Transvaal necessitated his presence there. He left almost immediately for Johannesburg, after arranging that my husband and I should follow in a week or two. On his arrival in Johannesburg he took a small house in a distant suburb, put into it the absolute minimum of furniture, and here, shortly afterwards, we joined him. Mrs. Gandhi and the three boys remained in Phoenix to continue their life there, the boys again going back to a few haphazard lessons as opportunities arose. The eldest boy, by this time, was making an urgent demand for what he called a proper education. Just before I left Phoenix, he had said to me:

“My father was properly educated; why can’t I be?”

I sympathized with him, but repeated to him the things his father had said to me.

“That is all very well,” he replied; “but my father could not do the work he is doing if he had not been educated, and I want to be, too.”

I promised to talk it over with Mr. Gandhi, but I had no hope of success with him.

. . . . .

The little house to which I was taken was devoid of any pretence of beauty or of the things that I had been accustomed to look upon as necessities. There were no carpets or rugs to cover the bare

deal boards of the floor, no curtains to the windows, only some ugly yellow blinds to keep some suggestion of privacy. Of course, there was not a picture on the yellow-washed walls, and only furniture of the simplest was installed in the house.

As soon as I arrived I looked over the place to see what I could do with it. I knew Mr. Gandhi did not want to have a middle-class house again, and my husband was indifferent to the many details that make a house home, since he was, like Mr. Gandhi, entirely absorbed by the fresh troubles arising for the Indian community. I soon set to work to improve matters, turned the kitchen into a room where meals could be taken, and arranged our books and few personal things in the front room to make a little sitting-room. The other two rooms were bedrooms, one for Mr. Gandhi and one for my husband and me. All the rooms were very small, not one being big enough to take even two single beds in it. There was also an outside room for a servant, but as we were not to keep a servant, a young Indian in Mr. Gandhi's charge occupied that. In the front of the house was a little verandah, or stoep; otherwise it stood facing a big stretch of kopje leading away to a district that had been named the "Highlands," because a few well-to-do Scotch people had built for themselves houses there.

A few days after my arrival in Johannesburg I

said to Mr. Gandhi that I wanted some curtains, some floor-covering, and a few other things to make the little house "home."

"But why?" asked Mr. Gandhi, in a surprised tone. "Why? Is not the country that you can see from your windows more beautiful than any picture? Why, then, do you want to shut it out by curtains? You have said you love sky-scenes and beautiful sunsets. There you have it all in front of you. I do not understand why you want to shut it out with curtains."

"Some lace curtains or thin muslin will not shut it out," I replied. "They can just come down the sides of the windows to hide the cheap, ugly wood. And anyway, I cannot be looking out of the windows all day. Besides, it gets dark soon after six, and then I have to look at the walls. It is not as though the house had any beauty of itself; it is all cheap and hard, and the bareness worries me. I can make it look much better with very little money, and even a picture or two. I should like to hide that ugly wall."

"But," said Mr. Gandhi, "can you have any painting more beautiful than that which you can see from here?" And Mr. Gandhi stretched his arm towards the striking view seen from the window in the little sitting-room. "Why do you want to cumber yourself with things that will only need more time to be spent upon them? You say you want beauty. You have it around you.

God has given you the reality; why, then, worry about the things made by man?"

"I do not so easily distinguish between God and man as you do," I replied. "I cannot draw a line of demarcation between them in such a manner. If man creates things of beauty, it is God speaking through him."

"But," again urged Mr. Gandhi, "if you have God, do you need to worship man?"

"I can worship God through man," I replied.

"No, you lose sight of God in the worship of man."

"I do not agree with you. I know I can be brought near to a mystic feeling of love, or beauty, by seeing something beautiful that man has made. Man is God's interpreter."

For a little while there was silence; then Mr. Gandhi said:

"Very well, if you feel you must have curtains and carpets, you must have them. We will talk it over with Henry."

And within a few days a carpet was bought and I was busy making curtains for the windows and cushions for the chairs, and even a picture was procured for the wall. And in the course of a few weeks the little house became a home.

Mr. Gandhi teased me about the things I added to it, telling me that the time I spent on such things, either making or caring for them, I

could spend on acquiring knowledge as I had often said I desired to do.

"But I think while I needlework," I said; "my brain is not idle because my hands are busy. And needlework is restful to the nerves."

I sometimes wonder whether, as he spins his khadi-thread, with his mind on his many problems, Mahatma Gandhi recalls these conversations.

As I said before, we were not to keep a servant, but it was arranged that the household tasks were not to fall entirely upon my shoulders. One of the men of the house was to keep the windows clean, another the stoep and the yard swept and tidy. All the ordering was done in town, from a list I made out, by one of the men. Breakfast at this period consisted of fruit and brown bread and nut-butter, for those who wanted it, and each one prepared what he wanted himself. The men all left early in the morning, and I was left with the day to myself to put the house in order and cook the evening meal. The washing-up of the dinner things was to be shared by the men of the household; my part of the evening's work was clearing the things away. This, however, was not found a very satisfactory arrangement. Mr. Gandhi and my husband had not the time for such domestic duties as were supposed to fall upon them, and after awhile a young Native boy was procured to help in kitchen work and do the windows and

other things. He, however, was very raw, and after I found him blacking the table in the kitchen instead of scrubbing it, as I had told him to do, I got rid of him and tried another one.

Mr. Gandhi was amused by my struggles to teach a "piccanin" how to clean a floor or a stove or windows. But he also recognized that, as I was approaching motherhood, I ought to have some proper assistance in the house, and eventually, after a further period of no domestic help, about a month before my first baby was born, I got a young coloured girl as general help. This meant supplying her with a room. Fortunately, the young Indian occupying the outside room had been wanting for some time to go and stay with some friends he had in Johannesburg, so he gave up his room and the maid took up her quarters there.

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The days had by now become most strenuous and anxious for us all. A crisis was approaching in the life of the Indian community. The evenings of philosophic calm were no more. Often it was midnight before Mr. Gandhi reached the little home, and he had had to tramp four miles after fifteen hours of hard work in town to reach his place of refuge. But even then his day's labours were often not ended. Some of his people would tramp the four miles with him to continue dis-

cussing ways and means of dealing with the troubles around them. It was not an unusual thing to have four or more men return at midnight with Mr. Gandhi, and when all were too worn out to continue to talk, rugs would be thrown down along the passage or anywhere else for the visitors to get a few hours' sleep ere they started to tramp back to town. A bus used to run from near our house to the centre of the city, but this was for the convenience of white folk; coloured people were not allowed to ride in it. This meant that any Indian people coming to see Mr. Gandhi always had to walk to and fro, unless they could afford to hire a private carriage. Of this hardship Mr. Gandhi never complained for himself. Indeed, he could, if he had cared to apply for the privilege, have received exemption, but he refused to accept an advantage over the humblest of his countrymen. Moreover, he believed in using one's own legs as a means of getting anywhere within reasonable distance, but he did feel it often when some elderly Indian man or woman had made the journey on foot in the hope of seeing him for a little while alone.

An amusing but, at the time of its happening, rather startling incident occurred during this period. Some visitors had returned with Mr. Gandhi late at night, and about 1 a.m. some of them had thrown themselves on rugs along the passage, and the others on the tiny verandah at

the front of the little house. The place had grown silent, all its inhabitants asleep, when we were startled and alarmed by a stifled scream, and the sounds of groans and scuffling. The sounds came from immediately under our bedroom window where the verandah was. We hastily rose to see what was the matter. We threw open the window and in the meantime someone opened the street door. It did not take long to discover the cause of the trouble. Two men had arrived from an up-country place, and, determining to see Mr. Gandhi without delay, had walked to our house. The night was dark, and when they had found the house they hunted for the door. In their search for this they had stepped on a sleeper. The sleeper thus rudely awakened, and probably thinking he was being assaulted by a thief, immediately struck out. Lamps were lit, all came inside, and more talk ensued. I am afraid none of us had much more sleep that night, although fortunately no one was any the worse for the unpleasant escapade.

Such human incidents, although disturbing at the time, lightened the strain of the anxiety of those days. We learned to find some food for kindly laughter even in the midst of the most trying days. Mr. Gandhi never failed to see the amusing side of things, and his smile and a few soothing words from him helped to keep many dark events from becoming tragic.



## CHAPTER VII

Mr. Gandhi had the reputation, among both professional colleagues and laymen, of being a very sound lawyer; and he was held in the highest esteem by the courts. When the office was very busy, law cases would often be talked over by Mr. Gandhi and my husband in the evening, and I was present at the discussion of many troublesome legal problems. Sometimes, however, a case would be interesting, not so much because of points of law involved in it, but because of Mr. Gandhi's reaction to it. One such was the following.

It was a rather small and sordid affair; a man was charged with stealing, and had applied to Mr. Gandhi to defend him. It was well understood that Mr. Gandhi would never plead "not guilty" for a man whom he believed to be guilty. He would plead "extenuating circumstances," but would not stand before a magistrate and knowingly state a falsehood. He had been known on more than one occasion to throw up his brief and leave the court upon discovering that his client had betrayed him. Every client was forewarned of this, and engaged his services on that understanding.

When, therefore, Mr. Gandhi interviewed the accused man he interrogated him closely, and

very soon the man confessed that he had committed the crime.

"But why did you do it?" asked Mr. Gandhi. "You knew you were stealing, and you knew the penalty. Why, then, did you do it?"

"I had to live," replied the man with finality.

"You had to live?" echoed Mr. Gandhi softly. "Why?"

I have often thought of that episode since, and Mr. Gandhi's "Why?" at the end. It was so indicative of the working of his mind. "Why have you to live? What are you contributing to life?" were the questions perpetually before him.

On another occasion a client came one Sunday morning to inform Mr. Gandhi that he had just been arrested on a very serious charge and had been released on bail, and to ask Mr. Gandhi to appear for him in court next day. My husband, who had noticed that Mr. Gandhi was being rather badly overworked, expostulated with him for receiving the client on Sunday, when he should have been recuperating his mental and physical forces. Mr. Gandhi's reply was a gentle but penetrating rebuke.

"A man who is suffering misfortune knows no Sunday rest! This man is unhappy and anxious. How can I shut myself away from him, even if he is, as in the present case, guilty?"

On yet another occasion my husband, who for a time was in charge of the office accounts,

noticed that a client was heavily indebted to Mr. Gandhi, though he had several times been asked for payment. The case was a flagrant one. My husband, accordingly, drafted a letter of demand, threatening legal proceedings if the debt was not speedily liquidated, and had it placed before Mr. Gandhi for signature. Mr. Gandhi, however, sent for him.

“Don’t you know that I never invoke the law to secure payment of my own accounts, whatever I may do for clients upon their instructions? A man is not made honest by threats and force, and if the client does not willingly pay, I must suffer for my folly and lack of foresight in having allowed him to run up an account, instead of obtaining payment at the time.”

Another rather interesting story with a legal flavour is the following. Dr. F. E. T. Krause, now a Judge of the Supreme Court of South Africa, and then a well-known Advocate, had at one time incurred the severe displeasure of the British Government. He was tried in England for sedition, during the Boer War, was imprisoned and was afterwards disbarred by his Inn. Upon the resumption of peace and the establishment of British rule in the Transvaal, he had applied for, and obtained, readmission as an Advocate of the Transvaal Supreme Court, with a view to reinstatement at the English Bar. Mr. Gandhi, who had known him as Public

Prosecutor in Johannesburg before the war, and had received many kindnesses from him in the course of practice, happened to be in court that day on professional business. He was the first to congratulate Dr. Krause, and with great satisfaction assisted him to put on once more his professional robes, the sign and symbol of his restoration to the rights and privileges of the legal profession. It is curious to reflect that, since then, Mr. Gandhi himself has been disbarred by the Inner Temple; but I am afraid that Dr. Krause will never have the pleasure of officiating at Mr. Gandhi's restoration to the roll of barristers, for the great Indian leader now describes himself as a "farmer and spinner," and years ago renounced for ever the practice of law, which, he said more than once, "in its final resort, rests upon physical force."

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I used to experiment with all kinds of foods, trying to make pleasing and appetizing dishes of different vegetables or fruits or cereals, and often I knew the experiment was a ghastly failure. But Mr. Gandhi and my husband would heroically eat the preparation and generally praise it. Often, however, they and other people present would be talking, and I felt sure they had not noticed what they had been eating; which was possibly the best thing sometimes!

During these years our experiments in dietetics were many and various. For some months no cooking of any kind was done with the addition of salt. It was cooked in a (so-called) conservative way without any condiments. This I found very unappetizing, but I continued to try it. Another period was marked by an absence of sugar, so as to avoid the use of a product of "indentured" labour, and for sweetening purposes I used dates or currants. Then we had a period of nearly all "unfired" food served with olive oil. I was not required to confine my own diet to these things and did not do so; but Mr. Gandhi and my husband kept to each experiment for weeks or months at a time, always expressing a great liking for the things they were having. Food values were most earnestly discussed, and their effect upon the human body and its moral qualities solemnly examined. For a time a dish of raw chopped onions, as a blood-purifier, regularly formed part of the dinner meal. Indeed, I was told that, so fond of Spanish onions in salad were Mr. Gandhi and a few other friends who regularly frequented a vegetarian restaurant in Johannesburg before my advent on the scene, that they jestingly formed themselves into "The Amalgamated Society of Onion-Eaters"! Ultimately, Mr. Gandhi came to the conclusion that onions were bad for the passions, and so onions were cut out. Milk, too, Mr. Gandhi said, affected the "passion"

side of human life and thereafter milk was abjured likewise. I did not mind the raw onions going, but I questioned the denial of milk.

"Why is it," I said, "if milk stimulates the passions, that it is the best food for babies and young children?"

"The mother's milk is the correct food for babies," replied Mr. Gandhi, "but it is not meant for adults."

"It may not be meant for adults because it is the food for babies. I do not mind that," I said, "but I cannot see that the same argument can be used against it as a stimulant of the passions. If that were correct," I said, "a milk-fed child would be a most unnatural little brute. Think of a little child obsessed with sex-passion because it had had a diet of milk. It is not reasonable!"

However, milk was not again a regular article of diet for Mr. Gandhi, and eventually he took a vow never again to touch cow's milk himself. This vow he has kept through the ensuing years, though, as will be seen later, to satisfy Mrs. Gandhi, he has since taken goat's milk, which, verbally at least, did not infringe his vow.

"We talk about food probably quite as much as gourmands do," I said on one occasion to Mr. Gandhi. "I am sure we talk about food more than most people; we seem to be always thinking of the things we either may or may not eat. Some-

times I think it would be better if we just ate anything and did not think about it at all."

"Even flesh?" teasingly queried Mr. Gandhi.

To which I replied: "A man shall be judged by what comes out of his mouth, not by what he puts into it."

We were talking of the value of courtesy in friendship one day. I had said that I did not like the idea that, because I was near to the heart of a person, I need not have the same courtesy shown to me as would be shown to a stranger.

"But," argued Mr. Gandhi, "it is the privilege of affection and friendship that it has not to show formality."

"I am not making a plea for formality, but why should it be considered more right for a man, for example, to open a door for a stranger when the same man would not attempt to open it for his wife?"

"But a man does not need to be always thinking about his own. His own are a part of himself."

"That argument may make an appeal to my heart but it does not to my brain," I objected.

"Then your brain is wrong," replied Mr. Gandhi. "I have often told you so; you should not trust it." And Mr. Gandhi laughed.

"I am serious," I said; "I want to know what you really think about it."

"Does a man think about his arm, then, or pay special attention to it? Of course not; it is a part of him, and is cared for with the rest of him. Our nearest are like that, a part of our very selves, and, as such, can seem to be forgotten, but they are always there."

"I think I sometimes prefer to be thought of, then, as someone perhaps a little farther away. I don't want to be put on one side as an unconscious bit of the body by those I love!"

"Then what do you want?" asked Mr. Gandhi.

"Well, I do not want the price I pay for love to be that I am ignored. It seems to me that because I love another I should show the best part of me to that one, and look for chances to give the little acts of courtesy that I believe love and friendship are entitled to."

"But if you know you are the heart of another, do you need to be told it, and shown it?"

"Yes," I replied. "I do; most certainly I do."

"That is not 'identification,' as all true love should be!"

"I am afraid we are getting too involved," I answered. "To return to the beginning; I said, and I say again, I think it wrong to omit the acts of thoughtful courtesy and self-control to those who have the first claim upon our consideration, and to reserve our smiling best for the stranger. I see it happen and it vexes me, for I cannot justify it."



"Then do not worry yourself by thinking about it!" was Mr. Gandhi's final reply.

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Another subject we almost contended about was what I called Mr. Gandhi's love of the uncomfortable.

"I do not know why you always want to choose the most uncomfortable way of doing a thing," I once said to him.

"But it is not uncomfortable to me," he replied. "What are you complaining about?"

"It must be uncomfortable to do so many of the things you do, not because you have to do them, but out of, what seems to me, a strange idea of principle. If you have to go from one place to another, you always look to see if there is a stony path to walk over, rather than the soft grass."

"Ease and comfort are often the paths from God. We must not let the body have its own way when it asks for sensuous ease."

"But God does not mean you to whip your body all the time."

"And He does not mean you to lose sight of Him because of it."

"No, I admit that, but I cannot help believing that God makes the flower-decked path for our enjoyment. I cannot believe He meant us to

ignore these flowers and hunt for jagged stones to cut our feet on."

"Our danger is of putting the comfort of our body and serving it before the service of God."

"But," again I urged, "we are not denying God because we appreciate the beauty of His world. Are the stones more His than the grass?"

"The temptation to seek ease and slothfulness is always with us and we have to guard against it."

But it was no use arguing with Mr. Gandhi when he was in these moods. His bent was naturally towards the ascetic and not towards the aesthetic. And it must be admitted that this tendency and his constant practice of the hard and simple life stood him in good stead when he had to endure the discomfort and privation of prison-life. He could adjure his followers so to live in times of peace that they might be able to endure hardship in times of struggle.

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Mr. Gandhi paid a flying visit to England in 1906, and when he unpacked his things after his return he brought me a parcel.

"For a present," he said.

I opened it wonderingly, for while he was always most generous, direct present-giving was not a habit of his.

"What is it?" I queried.

"Open it and see," he replied.

My husband was in the room with us, and bent over me as I opened the parcel and found a very elaborate bottle of some patent hair-restorer! I looked at the bottle, then at Mr. Gandhi, puzzled.

"It cost me two pounds!" he said ruefully.

"Two pounds!" I echoed incredulously. "What did you buy it for?"

"I did not want to buy it," he replied, somewhat plaintively.

"I do not understand. What happened to make you buy it? Because I know you did not buy it for me really."

"I was foolish and did not have the courage to acknowledge my folly. I went into the barber's saloon at the hotel (he had been staying at the Cecil in London) to get my hair cut. I was in a hurry and thinking about other things. The barber said I needed some treatment for my hair and suggested some preparation for it; I did not really attend to what he was saying, and when he pressed the matter, asking to be permitted to send a bottle of something for my use to my room, I agreed. I did not even undo the parcel at first when I saw it. Then, after a few days, when I was coming away, I was presented with a bill for two pounds for the wretched stuff! I did not want it, but I thought you might like to use it."

I thanked him. Then the three of us went off

into peals of laughter, and the £2 bottle of hair-restorer became a standing joke in the household. I believe that the contents ultimately found their way down the sink. It might have been dangerous to use the stuff!

## CHAPTER VIII

During a brief lull in the Indian troubles my first baby was born. This event seemed to give great joy to Mr. Gandhi, and the baby became the centre of a new human relationship. Every little detail of its life was a source of great interest to him. Its weight at birth, its feeding and development, its first signs of intelligence, and its very apparent determination to have its own way—every phase of its physical and emerging mental life was of intense pleasure, no less to Mr. Gandhi than to my husband and to me.

I do not think, now, that we were any of us very wise in the care and training of an infant child. I had no nurse and I was myself too ignorant of mothercraft to have any knowledge of how to bring up a baby, and, unfortunately for me, I was living too far out of town to receive from older and more experienced women the advice and assistance I needed. Mr. Gandhi believed in the instinct of mother-love to do that which was best and right for the child. So love was trusted as a guide for the child's needs, and much earnest discussion took place as to the best treatment for a very young baby.

To-day, a good and well-trained nurse starts training a baby in the way it should go from the first day it is born. The nurse I had for the birth

of my baby knew nothing of the training of to-day, and was, therefore, of no use in putting in any foundation of good habits for the child, or of advising me, and the baby, unlike most normal babies, never seemed to want to sleep at proper hours. Particularly was this noticeable at night-time. Mr. Gandhi came to the conclusion that it seemed useless to try to coax or force the child to sleep when it did not want to. "So," said he, "since the child evidently will not or cannot adapt itself to the needs of the mother, the mother must adapt herself to the needs of the baby. You must try to sleep when the baby sleeps, whatever the time may be, day or night."

I did not think the advice wise, but I tried it, with, of course, no success. To add to the difficulty of any such experience, my "coloured" maid had found living out of town too lonely for her and so had gone away, leaving me to do the best I could by myself.

We procured another "coloured" girl and made an experiment of another kind with her. We had so often said we believed in the unity of all life, and did not believe in artificial barriers of class divisions. So it was arranged, when we engaged the new girl, half Native and half "poor white," that I should have a nice idealistic talk with her, and after that we should invite her to sit at table with us. She did it twice, seeming positively frightened the whole time. Then she

absolutely refused to sit at dinner with us again. I asked her why she preferred having her dinner alone instead of having it with us. She could give no reason but she "didn't like it." At the end of two weeks she ran away from us, without waiting to receive any money or anything else; just packed her belongings into her box and went off early one morning with it before anyone was about. Our kindness had evidently scared her away. So disappeared another theory. I did not attempt the experiment again. Neither did Mr. Gandhi ask me to do so. I next procured a full-blooded Basuto woman, a member of a one-time Chief's family, and found her one of the best, most helpful and faithful domestic helps I have had anywhere in the various parts of the world where I have lived and kept servants. She was only with me a few weeks, for she had to leave to join her husband in a different part of the town. But I remember her with gratitude for her devotion to me and my baby.

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It was while we were occupying this little bungalow that Mr. Gandhi's life was attempted by one of his compatriots and he lay ill for a considerable time at the house of some European friends who had gone to his rescue. During his absence from the home in the suburbs we left it and took a small house in town. Here Mr. Gandhi came

on his recovery, but while he was still very weak. During the early days of his convalescence he developed the power, which he afterwards retained, of being able to fall asleep while at work just where he sat, and after a very few moments to awaken refreshed and without any break in his continuity of thought. I have sat in the room while he has been dictating to his secretary, who had come up from the office for this purpose, and quite suddenly the voice ceased and the eyes closed. The secretary and I would sit still, then equally suddenly Mr. Gandhi's eyes would open again and the voice would continue dictating from the very point that it had stopped. I never remember his asking, "Where was I?" or "What was I saying?"

His utter refusal to take any kind of medicine during his illness was a great source of worry and perplexity to his friends and those nursing him, but the simplest kinds of remedies he refused. He trusted to Nature to perform her own work, and fortunately Nature did, but only after he had suffered unnecessarily.

As soon as he recovered sufficiently he threw his whole strength again into the work of the office and Indian Colonial Politics. Yet he always found time, either early morning or late at night, to have a few quiet moments with the baby and me.

The story of the "Passive Resistance" struggle,



which lasted for some years, has been told by himself and others. It is not, therefore, my intention even to touch upon it here, except at times to illustrate the warm human side of the great leader of that movement. Soon after his recovery from the attack made upon him he was arrested in connection with the revival of "Passive Resistance" and sentenced to three months' hard labour.

As the Indian struggle for rights grew more intense and more difficult, the periods of prison-life became almost a refuge for Mr. Gandhi. He lived the philosophy he had taught at this time, to do everything in one's power to right the wrong one saw around one, but if forcibly removed from the field of action, then to trust to God to carry His work on without one. So, in prison, notwithstanding the sordid surroundings and the rough labour he was at first put to, his soul grew in quietude. He thought and intensified his vision. Each time he returned to the world one felt that some almost indefinable growth had taken place in him during his absence.

Two very different human incidents stand out in my mind during this period. Immediately upon his return from three months' imprisonment he took up the fight with added vigour. He seldom got more than about four hours' sleep, and every minute of his waking hours was occupied with anxious thought and work. One night he returned

home late as usual, and went to the kitchen to get some lemonade that was kept there.

Our little house was in a rather cheap neighbourhood, since, apart from the desire for simplicity, all the available money was used to assist the struggle; and we, therefore, had to take a house at a low rental. The one we occupied was the best we could find at the time, but it was a miserable sort of a place, built in rather a primitive manner. There had not originally been a bathroom, and a previous tenant had had a bath put into a long cupboard that ran under a peculiar stairway which led to a long and odd-shaped room under a decidedly sloping roof. The bath had been just put in without any proper attempt to arrange for any means to carry off the waste water. A hole had been cut in the wall and a piece of pipe attached to the plug-hole in the bath was run through this hole. The water ran out of this down the wall at the side of the house, and was supposed to find its way to the gutter in the road. This seldom happening completely, it meant that the wall, which was in shadow, and the ground around it were always damp. Consequently, we were troubled with a great number of big, fat slugs crawling about as soon as it was dark.

As Mr. Gandhi went along the passage-way to the kitchen with stockinged feet he trod upon one of these slimy creatures. He felt its soft body

crush under his foot and for a moment thought that it must be a piece of fish or meat, left there by the non-vegetarian Native girl. Coming at the end of a tiring and worrying day, immediately before a further period of imprisonment, it seemed just too much to be endured patiently. His ascetic nature rose in revolt, and with an almost passionate fervour he exclaimed: "Thank God, I shall be in jail to-morrow!" We often laughed about this incident afterwards, but at the time it seemed tragic that his only place of refuge from the trying problems of life was a prison.

. . . . .

On his release from this term of imprisonment, finding me ill, he expressed much concern about it. I had not had any proper sleep for a considerable time, and in addition to many factors producing insomnia, I was trying to wean my baby, now eight months old, and finding it extremely difficult. Mr. Gandhi asked: "If someone could take the baby for a few nights, do you think you could sleep?"

"I do not know," I replied, "but I am getting absolutely finished out!"

"Will you trust me with him?" he then asked.

"But what can you do?" I questioned.

"If you will trust him to me, I believe I could help to wean him. I am sure I could coax him to sleep away from you."

I consented to allow Mr. Gandhi to try, and it was arranged that, on his return from a meeting, whatever the time was—it would certainly be after eleven o'clock—he would take the child from me.

He arrived home about one o'clock that night, and coming to my room took the baby from his cot to sleep on a little mattress on the floor beside his own. He had a jug of water and a glass beside him, if the child should seem thirsty. The household settled down to sleep, and for about five hours not a sound was heard to break the restful quiet of the night, the baby sleeping throughout without a whimper. This arrangement was repeated every night for about two weeks, by which time the weaning was completed, and the baby returned to my room in much better condition than when he left it.

. . . . .

I cannot think of any human problem that at some time or other I did not attempt to thrash out with Mr. Gandhi. Most often, the discussions arose spontaneously and were the outcome of something he said that would seem to challenge my mind or something deep-seated in me. One day he was talking of the value of celibacy for the priesthood and for all those engaged in real teaching.

“I appreciate what you say,” I remarked, “but

I often think it is more difficult for the man or woman, cut off from a vital experience, to be able to advise concerning it."

"He can concentrate on the perfect," replied Mr. Gandhi.

"But concentrating on the perfect will not help him to understand the mere human difficulties. The priest or teacher who has never known the horror of seeing someone he loves and is responsible for, starving for food, cannot understand the temptation of such a person stealing."

"It is just because he can stand outside of the temptation that he is most able to help. You do not go to the sick to help the sick, but to the strong and well."

"I admit that," I replied, "but I think I do not like your implied suggestion that it is wrong to produce children."

"I did not say it was wrong."

"No, you did not *say* so. But you did say something to the effect that it was a pandering to the flesh."

"And is it not?" queried Mr. Gandhi.

"No," I replied emphatically; "that reduces the production of children to a weakness, if not an evil. If it is wrong, God Himself must be wrong, for it seems to be the only way He has of creating His children, and without it human life would cease on this planet."

"Would that be so terrible?"

"I am not at all sure it would be right, until mankind has attained the perfection we believe it has to grow to."

"But," persisted Mr. Gandhi, "you do believe that people who have a great mission or work to do should not spend their energy and time in caring for a little family, when they are called to a bigger field of work?"

"Yes, I believe that."

"Then what are you quarrelling with me about?"

"Only that you are still making me feel that you think it to be a higher condition of life to be celibate than to be a parent, and I say that the condition may be a difference of kind and not of degree."

. . . . .

This question of "to be or not to be" a parent was one frequently discussed. Mr. Gandhi was reaching the point where he began to think that it would be better for the world, and probably for God, if mankind ceased to reproduce itself. There came a time when I felt that if one were going to have a child, it would seem as though it were "conceived in sin and carried in wickedness." I remember, when one of the members of the colony at Phoenix was going to have a baby, I did not for some weeks mention the lady's name in connection with babies. In due

time the child was born and two days later my husband and I went to Phoenix to see Mr. Gandhi. We talked in the usual way for a little while. Then Mr. Gandhi almost plaintively said:

"You have not asked about the new baby. Don't you want to know about it?"

"Yes, very much," I replied, "but I was not sure what you thought about it."

"Well, come along, we will all go and see it."

And we three went off to visit the mother and child.

Mr. Gandhi seemed quite pleased about it, talking in the most happy and satisfied manner about the baby's good points and the mother's progress.

When he entered the mother's bedroom his eyes were alight with affectionate interest. I felt somewhat puzzled, but realized that even Mr. Gandhi distinguished between abstract truth and human love, and mother-love was always of great beauty and joy to him. I think he often endowed a mother with many attributes she did not necessarily possess.

"Being a mother," I once said to him, "does not make a woman wise."

"No," he replied, "not simply being a mother; but being a loving mother does, for all real love teaches us wisdom, and one of the finest aspects of love in human life is mother-love. It contains within itself the seeds of great sacrifice."

"Yet a mother may love her children dearly and have no wisdom in training them," I objected.

"Love will teach her even that," he replied.

"But it does not even teach her how to feed them properly. She can kill them by loving over-feeding."

"That applies to the mothers who have lost touch with their true instincts. Your civilization and living in big cities have destroyed the knowledge that motherhood should give. Don't you think you know how to deal with your baby?"

"I am learning by experience. I am not sure about my instinctive knowledge of the subject."

"Trust your love and it will not lead you wrong," he concluded. "Don't try to reason with your brain too much about it."



## CHAPTER IX

One evening a big meeting of Indians and sympathizers was held in the Masonic Hall, Johannesburg. The large gathering overflowed the confines of the hall, and crowded up the doorway and porch. Mr. Gandhi was the chief speaker and always drew a big crowd to him wherever he went. At the close of the meeting Mr. Gandhi came down from the platform and talked with a few people; then he and I walked out together. As we reached the outer door I noticed a man standing in the shadow of it. Mr. Gandhi also specially noticed him, it was evident, for he went directly to him and linked his arm in the man's, saying something in a quiet, earnest voice to him. The man hesitated for one moment, then turned and walked away with Mr. Gandhi, I meantime keeping my place on the other side of him. We walked the length of the street. I did not understand what the others were talking about, even could I have heard it. But I could not hear, for both men were speaking in a very low voice. At the end of the street the man handed something over to Mr. Gandhi and walked away. I was somewhat puzzled by the whole proceeding and, as soon as the man had gone, I asked Mr. Gandhi what

was the matter. "What did the man want—anything special?" I queried.

"Yes," replied Mr. Gandhi, "he wanted to kill me."

"To kill you," I repeated. "To kill you? How horrible! Is he mad?"

"No, he thinks that I am acting traitorously towards our people; that I am intriguing with the Government against them, and yet pretending to be their friend and leader."

"But that is all wicked and dreadful," I protested. "Such a man is not safe; he ought to be arrested. Why did you let him go like that? He must be mad!"

"No," replied Mr. Gandhi, "he is not mad, only mistaken; and you saw, after I had talked to him, he handed over to me the knife he had intended to use on me."

"He would have stabbed you in the dark. I . . ."

But Mr. Gandhi interrupted me. "Do not disturb yourself so much about it. He thought he wanted to kill me; but he really had not the courage to do so. If I were as bad as he thought I was, I should deserve to die. Now we will not worry any more about it. It is finished. I do not think that man will attempt to injure me again. Had I had him arrested I should have made an enemy of him. As it is, he will now be my friend."

We had by this time moved to a somewhat larger house, and furnished it slightly more elaborately. I was expecting another baby and the methods of the household had had to be altered. The constant influx of Indian guests, both by day and by night, had to cease. It was quite natural that people from all over South Africa to see Mr. Gandhi came prepared to stay at least for a night at our little house. But the time came when that had to be altered, so it was arranged that, whenever Mr. Gandhi could, he should stay with us, but otherwise it should be given out that he was no longer with us, and our home should no longer be the centre of the Passive Resistance struggle, but our own private residence.

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One other amusing incident occurred about this period, but one that caused us all to think. We had a cat, and in the natural order of life it gave birth to kittens. Unfortunately for itself and us, it produced a large family at one attempt. When I saw six little kittens I wondered what I was going to do with them. It was useless suggesting, even if I had wanted to do so, to either Mr. Gandhi or my husband, who shared his views on the sanctity of life, that some of the kittens should have a watery grave. So we left the mother to struggle along with her brood as we supposed Nature intended her to do. The cat tried to settle

the question for herself and us. After a few days she ceased to feed two of them, and they were starving. I tried to give them milk, but they could not take it from me in the only way I knew how to give it to them. Then one died. The mother, still finding her family too large, tried to kill two of the others herself. She started by biting off their front legs and then left the poor creatures to their fate. We were confronted with the problem of dealing with the mutilated kittens. I asked Mr. Gandhi and my husband what ought to be done. I do not remember what reply I got, but I do recollect drowning the injured and dying mites myself. From that time we decided not to keep a cat; the present one and the kittens should be given away, and we would not have a cat again with its problems in our midst. Mr. Gandhi, in explanation of the callous behaviour of the cat, said that when we domesticated animals we destroyed their natural feeling, and that probably accounted for the cat destroying her young in the way she had done. I, however, wondered!

This cat incident is also reminiscent of a dog episode that occurred soon afterwards. I had a nice, healthy dog given to me, and, in accordance with the household tradition, tried to bring him up a vegetarian. I had made for him quantities of "mealie pap" and other things, and he had a very great liking for grapes. We talked to all

our friends of the splendid behaviour of our vegetarian dog, and Mr. Gandhi was proud of him. As, at the time, we were boycotted by all our neighbours, on account of our having "coloured people" in the house, we never heard of the troubles of the neighbourhood; but one evening a member of the household, falling over something at the back door, called out for assistance. Investigation ensued, and we discovered a huge joint of venison. Later on I found that for months our dog must have stolen chickens and anything else he could find, and had eaten them raw. Some of our theories were thus found to have, if nothing worse, at least weak spots!

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A little group of us, including Mr. Gandhi, my husband, myself and a European guest, were talking of the dietetic value of raw or unfired food, especially fruits and vegetables; or, if not actually uncooked, then conservatively cooked, the whole of the fruit or vegetable to be eaten, exclusive only of the stones.

As I have said in a previous chapter, Mr. Gandhi and I had had such discussions often, but our guest was recently converted to Gandhism, and, being a new convert, he was tremendously in earnest and a "wholesale" experimentalist.

"Tomatoes should always be eaten with their skins," said my husband, sententiously.

"I do not mind that if they are not too tough," I replied.

"The skins form 'roughage,'" interjected Mr. Gandhi, "which the body requires. It helps elimination. Potatoes, too, have their most important mineral salts just under the skin, and should always be cooked with the skin on, and the skin, too, should be eaten."

"That is all right for baked potatoes," I interrupted. "They are quite nice in a well-baked jacket."

"The value of cabbage," Mr. Gandhi went on, "is in the water the cabbage is boiled in; one could drink that and throw away the cabbage itself."

"Potato parings make a very good soup, I believe," remarked our guest. "Of course, properly scrubbed and cleaned first." And he looked hopefully at me.

"We have tried cabbage water," I said, "without salt or anything added. Henry said it tasted nice, and drank about a pint and a half of it, but he could not go to the office afterwards, for he was too unwell to do so! I do not like potato-skins, and I am sure that I won't like potato-skin soup!"

"Have you tried it?" asked Mr. Gandhi, turning to me.

"I have tried eating boiled potatoes with their skins and all, and it made me ill."

"No, that could not have made you ill," smilingly said Mr. Gandhi."

"But I know it did, because of the result," I replied, "and, anyway, I do not like things like that."

"Our tastes become vitiated in modern life, and we waste the best of the food by throwing away the skin," said our guest somewhat impatiently.

"Yes, we have forgotten to live as Nature intended us to do, and we pay for it in the ills of modern civilization," continued Mr. Gandhi.

"Do you think we ate those things, with their skins, when we were nearer to Nature than we are to-day?" I asked with apparent meekness.

Our guest looked at me with compassion, not untouched with contempt.

"Of course we did," he replied with dogmatic emphasis.

Mr. Gandhi, who knew me better than our guest, was, I believe, wondering what I was going to say next.

"Then how is it," I said, "that monkeys, in a state of nature, chew off the skins of carrots and apples and throw that part away, peel bananas and then reject the skins?"

"That is not so," said our guest, dissenting energetically.

"But it is," I interrupted. "Is it not, Mr. Gandhi? You know that monkeys never eat the skin or peel, do they?"

Our guest turned to Mr. Gandhi, convinced

that I should get a verbal smacking for such a heresy.

"I am afraid Millie is right," quietly came from the umpire.

Then silence fell for a few moments, which I broke by remarking: "Even if, in a state of nature, animals eat uncooked food, it does not prove anything except that they have not learned to cook it. For if you give them cooked stuff—buns for instance to an elephant; all kinds of cooked food to a pig; and any cooked dainties to a monkey—they are eaten with enjoyment. So what happens then? Does Nature go wrong in these cases by not aiding the creatures instinctively to reject the cooked food?"

No one answered me, but Mr. Gandhi laughed softly and our guest looked vexed.

. . . . .

I sometimes think that Mr. Gandhi enjoyed such discussions, not because of their intrinsic merits, but because of the different points of view he would hear stated, and also because he often liked to hear me express myself vigorously, even if he did not altogether approve of my comment. Once he said to me:

"Do you ever believe anyone to be entirely right?"

"No, I think not. To be entirely right one



would have to have the knowledge and wisdom of the Infinite, and that no one has."

"And so you bend the knee to none?" he asked questioningly, but with a twinkle in his eye.

"To no man do I yield up absolutely my intelligence," I replied.

"And you call no man Master?" he said smilingly.

"That sounds horribly arrogant, I know, but I believe I am a seeker after Truth, and no one man holds it all."

"Do you think you will ever find it?" he asked.

"No, for if I thought I had found it I should know it could not be. My finite mind could not even apprehend the Infinite; how then could I find it?"

"And you will never find peace," Mr. Gandhi said, almost sadly.

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On another occasion I put the question to Mr. Gandhi, in answer to a statement of his about natural living and the training of children:

"What is natural? We really do not know."

"But we do," he replied. "Nature speaks through our instincts very clearly, if only we listen to her."

"I do not agree with that," I said. "My reason used to tell me it was not true, and now my experience confirms it. The whole of our young

life is one long training out of our natural instincts."

"That is where we are wrong," said Mr. Gandhi. "That is where our conflict comes in."

"But children left to themselves would be impossible as members of any society, for even their natural functions have to be trained. I don't believe they would walk upright unless they were taught and encouraged to do so."

"Of course they would," said Mr. Gandhi. "It is natural for man to walk upright."

"No, I do not think it is natural, in the sense in which you are using the word. It is natural that a human being can do so, but I believe children would just shuffle along like monkeys, unless they were taught otherwise. There is that story we recently heard of the child who was stolen by baboons from a Boer farm, and when found years afterwards she used an arm and hand to help herself along. Children would not learn to speak, unless they were taught to do so. They would just grunt and make strange sounds."

"You are exaggerating," said Mr. Gandhi, "and you do not believe all you are saying."

"I am logical," I replied, "and know that what I say is true. My baby has the capacity for expressing the qualities that belong to human life; but I realize that I have to train him in their expression. Every mother and nurse knows that, during the early years of a child's life, she is

training the child out of its natural instincts. Think of one thing only, how everything a child gets hold of he puts into his mouth. If it were poison, he would soon die. Nature does not seem to teach him that he may not chew coal or poison-berries. He . . ."

"In a natural condition of life, he would not be able to get at coal," laughingly broke in Mr. Gandhi.

"But he probably would get poison much more easily," I retorted quickly.

"No, your reasoning is false," said Mr. Gandhi. "Were it otherwise, we could not have survived as human beings. Nature guides us and protects us."

"Nature guides us through the mind of man, I am thinking, and the mind of man is also Nature. Where can you say, this is Nature and that is not?"

"I think there is a line drawn between the works of beneficent Nature and the evil that the mind of man conceives," replied Mr. Gandhi with finality.

. . . . .

Some weeks went by, and once again we were talking of the training of children. The subject was specially to the front at that time, because of the rapid development of my own little baby. My experiments in allowing him to do just the things he wanted to do I had ceased to find

satisfactory, and by now I was trying to train him to sit in a chair for his meals and feed himself with a spoon. One day, he turned his plate upside down, started picking up bread and milk in one hand, and banging the sloppy mess with a spoon in the other. I corrected him, and he protested in the usual way. Mr. Gandhi was in the room at the time.

"You see," I said to him, "that is all perfectly natural, but he must not be allowed to do it, nor will I allow him to try to eat bread and milk with his hands. For," I continued, "if he is to be a member of any community, he has got to learn to do as the other members do. Instinct will have to go, I am afraid."

"But instinct is right to make him eat only when he is hungry and needs food," said Mr. Gandhi. "Do not force him to take food when obviously he does not need it."

"It is not that he does not need food," I replied. "He does not need it now, but he does not understand that he cannot throw it on to the floor and still have it on his plate in front of him. How can I let him scramble over the floor, picking up the bits of sloppy bread with his fingers?"

"But the way he should eat is only a question of custom. Instinctively, a child does eat with its fingers. You may teach it not to do so, but take away its spoon and fork and it reverts to Nature."

"I know all that is only a question of custom," I replied, "and I realize that if we lived in a jungle we should obey our primitive instincts, and it would be quite right to do so. But I do not accept the suggestion that what may be right for the individual in the jungle is right for him as a member of a civilized community."

"But you do admit that the instincts of the man in the jungle will probably be right for him there?"

"Yes, I admit that, as long as he remains in the jungle. When he comes away, however, the instincts may be quite wrong."

"But that would be the environment, not the instincts, at fault. That is what is wrong with so many of our people in India; their instincts and habits are right for the village and the country but wrong for the town."

"Then are instincts a safe guide for us?" I asked.

"We are getting away from our original point," replied Mr. Gandhi. "We were talking of training the child."

"Yes," I said, "and you rather seem to think, or to imply that you do, that children should be just left to grow and not be spoilt by training."

"What I mean is this: Children have in them the spark of God, and society so covers it up that they forget it or it is killed in them."

"But," I replied, "the spark of God is not

killed because a child is not allowed to give way to his natural instincts. To eat with a spoon, for instance, or to wash with soap, or to cut his toe-nails with scissors, would not make him any the less conscious of the God within. Saints have come out of civilized life as well as from the Himalayas."

"Yes, but in spite of it, not because of it," said Mr. Gandhi.

"Do you think children would grow as perfect flowers in a garden if left to Nature? I do not think so, and even in a garden the best flowers are nearly always trained by the gardener. They become very different specimens under training than they were in their original state."

"Yes, they do become different. They are trained to please the eye by their appearance, but the soul of the flower, the scent of it, is lost in the process."

## CHAPTER X

That little home, like the others, came to an end. The house was given up, the furniture disposed of, and I went with my two babies to Durban for a few months, my husband remaining behind in Johannesburg with Mr. Gandhi. About a month later I received a very important and urgent letter from Mr. Gandhi.

I would see, he said, that Henry (my husband) had been asked to go to India to plead the South African Indian cause there. He would be away for some months, perhaps a year or more. But he would not consent to Henry's going unless I first gave my consent. He did not wish to influence this in any way, but I was to do just what I thought right myself, and he would agree with me, and Henry should agree also! This letter was so characteristic of Mr. Gandhi, because in it he had done as he always did, put the moral obligation for decision upon the other person concerned, but at the same time conveyed a feeling, rather than a direct suggestion, that if one came to a different decision from his, one would place oneself in the wrong. Needless to say, my consent was given, and my husband joined me in Durban for a few days. I then arranged to return to England until we could once again set up home together in South Africa.

Within a few weeks of my return to England, Mr. Gandhi also arrived, to interview the British Government with reference to the position of Indians in South Africa.

During his stay in London I saw him seldom less than once a week, sometimes more often. While on this visit to London he met two English ladies, relatives of mine, who, hearing of his Phoenix scheme, became much enamoured of it and begged to be allowed to join it. Both being well educated, they offered themselves for secretarial or journalistic work, or as teachers for the proposed school. Several conversations on the subject ensued, but Mr. Gandhi did not feel at all sure as to the wisdom of allowing them to go to Phoenix. Eventually he turned them over to me, asking me to tell them quite frankly all I knew about the settlement, and telling them that after that they could again discuss the matter with him.

I was perfectly frank with them, and though, personally, I would have welcomed their presence in South Africa, I knew that they could never settle into the life expected of them. I, therefore, pointed out the difficulties they would find at Phoenix—the lack of all so-called modern domestic amenities, no proper sanitation (only a rough shed fixed up in the grounds), no bath-room, no society that they would call society, no music, no theatres, miles away from a railway



station and no conveyance to get there, snakes and insects making life a constant worry, and no doctor to be had for many miles, in case of accident or illness. Very simple food, and mostly, of the kind they would want, only procurable in tins. I told them that they would have to scrub their own floors and wash their own clothes, cook or prepare their own food and wash up their pots and pans themselves afterwards. They would only receive a trifling allowance for dress and necessities, and would never have anything to save for any future emergency.

Needless to say, the ladies had not considered any of these practical details. They had never known the necessity for troubling about such things themselves, and had not been able to visualize that "simple life" in a place like Phoenix meant simple life *in reality*, living close to Nature, and not as it might be portrayed on a London stage. They were most disappointed, and at first almost disinclined to believe me. Mr. Gandhi was again approached in my presence and asked if I had stated the blunt truth or if I had exaggerated.

Mr. Gandhi replied: "Yes, it is quite true, and I suppose that is how English girls with your upbringing would see it. I do not. Yet Millie is right."

"But could we not have a servant?" one said. "Surely our talents would not have to be wasted in such work as washing or cleaning?"

"To have a servant would alter the whole spirit of the colony," replied Mr. Gandhi.

"Then I am afraid we could not be happy there under such conditions."

"But happiness, you know, depends upon what you can give," Mr. Gandhi said, "not what you can get. However, I agree that, unless you could quite alter your values of things, you could not be happy there or give happiness to others."

The ladies did not go. Without any further hesitation they agreed that it was impossible to adapt themselves to such a life, which they had thought of so differently.

After they had gone, Mr. Gandhi smiled in rather an amused but wistful way.

"I am sorry," I said, "but I know it would not have been to anyone's benefit had they gone to South Africa, and I think they would have made you unhappy, too, for you would have felt responsible for their unhappiness, and you would then have had to send them back."

"Yes," he replied, "that may be true; but they say they are not happy here. This modern life of your great city is all wrong; it makes you all restless and discontented. You do not know yourselves what you want. You fill your lives with accumulating things, thinking they are necessary to you, and thus make prisons for yourselves."

Mr. Gandhi was not in London very long, but amongst the other delightful, warm, human acts of his I remember of his stay was the following:

One of my young friends was endeavouring to qualify for a profession, but, having no money, was passing through a desperately hard time. Mr. Gandhi knew her, too, and one day, in talking to him of her, I said: "I am worried about ——. I do wish I had a little money to lend her. She absolutely needs shoes and stockings and does not see how she can get them. Of course, if she can get through this year she will be able to manage, but it is the immediate *now* that is the trouble. I wish I could help her!"

"Do not worry about her," he replied, "she is too fine a character to be hurt by hardship; she will not fail, but will manage to get through all right."

A few days after this, when again I met her, she said: "I have had such a wonderful surprise. Mr. Gandhi sent me two pounds, asking me to accept it as a little present from him." So the shoes and stockings were bought to the satisfaction of us all. But Mr. Gandhi never mentioned the incident to me himself.

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It was during this visit to England that he met many of the leaders of the Women's Franchise campaign. He showed the greatest interest in

all they were doing, and in after-days often said that he learned much of the value and methods of passive resistance from some of the British women, and applied some of those methods himself in his own political struggles in South Africa. In particular, he spoke very highly of the little group of women workers associated with Mrs. Despard.

I recall that on one occasion, when we were talking of the Suffrage movement in England, he expressed regret that a militant section should have been formed and that it should have resorted to methods of violence. "They have their own weapon," he said. "Why should they copy the evil ways of men?"

"It may seem a pity," I replied, "but has not the meekness of woman been her undoing?"

"If she only reproduces the tactics of men in public life, she will not help the world's progress upwards."

"Some of these militant women are such gentle creatures, really," I said. "It is probably a temporary phase of woman's evolution."

"It may be so. Mrs. Despard herself is a wonderful woman. I had long talks with her in London and admire her greatly, and much appreciate her advocacy of 'spiritual resistance.' Mrs. Pankhurst, too, is a splendid woman, and it is all the more pity that woman's struggle for freedom should be spoilt by threats of physical force."

Mr. Gandhi was also greatly attracted to the Ethical movement, some of whose members came at the time into close and sympathetic touch with him, which was subsequently maintained, through the ensuing years of difficulty and anxiety, by frequent and encouraging correspondence. Whilst Mr. Gandhi's letters were nearly always brief and to the point, they nevertheless revealed a very fine human companionship and understanding.

## CHAPTER XI

The block of buildings, now known as Abbey House, in Victoria Street, Westminster, was, in the year 1909, known as Westminster Palace Hotel. It was a fine hotel, and catered for a good middle-class clientele, and for visiting politicians from overseas. Here Mr. Gandhi stayed on his second visit to England during the Passive Resistance struggle, and here many interesting people of all kinds came to see him.

Just as he loved offering hospitality in South Africa, so, too, he loved to offer it here. Sometimes, it seemed to me, he was in his happiest mood when he had a party of earnest and affectionate people around him. But even in London the hospitality offered was of the simplest kind, and must have been a source of amusement mingled with embarrassment to the hotel staff. In those days a gentleman was supposed to "behave as a gentleman," and one could not break the social code and expect much respect from what were then called the "lower orders."

I wish I could have heard what the hotel servants said amongst themselves about Mr. Gandhi and some of the people who visited him. Often a dozen of us would meet by invitation in his private sitting-room at lunch-time. The table in the centre, normally covered with a nice

velvet cloth, and looking reasonably respectable with Mr. Gandhi's books upon it, would be cleared. Books and papers would get stacked upon the floor. Then newspapers would be spread over the table, and piles of oranges, apples, bananas, perhaps grapes, and a big bag of unshelled monkey- or pea-nuts, would be put ready. Mr. Gandhi would ring for the waiter, and when an attendant, resplendent in white shirt and tail-coat, appeared, he would order tea and toast for those who desired it, and some plates. The waiter would look round the room, clear a portion of the table for his tray, and walk solemnly out. Soon the silver tea-tray, beautifully appointed, would be brought in; then we would set to work, eating, drinking, talking and laughing. Some would walk about or stand, and the nut-shells would fly about the room, orange juice would run over the paper-covered table, and at the end of the meal the room looked rather as if an ill-bred party of schoolboys had been let loose in it. I would gather the paper together with the orange-peel, the banana-skins, the apple-waste and the nut-shells, and stuff all I could into the wastepaper-basket. The bell would be rung, and the solemn attendant would come in and clear away the débris. Mr. Gandhi would be totally untroubled by all the mess and muddle in the room, and the waiter never lost his dignified gravity as he cleared away the

rubbish. It all seemed rather fun then. The breaking away from a conventional lunch gave an added enjoyment to monkey-nuts and tea; but I wonder what the waiters really thought!

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It was while I was paying one of my frequent visits to Mr. Gandhi at the hotel that the following conversation took place. We were alone together for a little while, and were talking about a visit he had made a day or two previously to some dear friends of mine. They were in trouble at the time, and though I knew Mr. Gandhi was sympathetic towards them in a general way, I felt he was somewhat impatient with the whole business.

"Why should they make so much trouble about it?" he said. "It is all a question of money only. If they gave up their present luxurious method of life and adopted a more simple one, they would have nothing to trouble about."

"It is not so easy as that," I replied, "and their method of life is not expensive."

"But they are living beyond their means, and that is dishonest."

"That is because their income has unexpectedly dropped. There is very little business, such as Mr. B—— does, being done anywhere at the present time."



"Then why not give up their house and take a cottage in the country?"

"That would not help much and it is not practicable."

"And they keep a maid," went on Mr. Gandhi; "why not give that up? Why does not Dora stay at home and look after her mother?"

"Dora is earning her own living. Were she to give that up, it would not help the home."

"Can't Mrs. B—— do her own work?" Mr. Gandhi asked.

"She has never done any rough work in her life," I replied.

"Then why should she not now begin to do so?"

"She could not do it. Her health would not permit her to."

"The trouble is," began Mr. Gandhi, "that the house is filled with all kinds of useless rubbish. She should get rid of it all. Why not throw the lot away, instead of having a woman to sweep heavy dust-collecting carpets, and clean a thousand bits of china and ornaments?"

"I am afraid you do not understand the psychology of such people as Mrs. B——. They are dear people, in a way, but could not stand the drastic treatment you suggest. It would kill them!"

"Then it is useless to worry about them. They must be left to their own devices. The trouble

with such people is the accumulation of things; that makes all their anxieties. They worry and work to procure and collect things round them, and cannot live were they to let them go. Happiness can never be found if we crowd our lives with things."

I realized that it was useless to pursue the subject further, and I realized, too, that there was much truth in what Mr. Gandhi said; but it was not the whole truth, and it was the bit of truth not voiced that made the complication for most people.

On another occasion, when Mr. Gandhi had been speaking of the thralldom of possessions, I said:

"I think you are mistaken when you state that people cannot be separated from their possessions. They can be, and not suffer much either."

"Then why do they strive so hard to keep them?"

"To keep and preserve them may be a queer form of principle or discipline with some people. They inherit things, or have them given to them, and then feel in duty bound to care for them," I replied.

"That is just it. They will spend their lives in a mistaken idea of duty to things instead of freeing themselves from them."

"But I am sure," I said, "there are many people who have great possessions, but who are not

bound to them. They could let them go quite easily, and I am sure one can be poor, have only a few valueless things, and yet be wickedly proud of them, and damage one's soul by the possession of them. After all, the test is not how much you have, but what you think of the things you have got."

"Yes, that is so. There is the story of the Hindu sage-King to whom came, one day, a Sannyasi with a single piece of cloth as his sole possession. The King, wishing to test the reality of the Sannyasi's apparent self-emancipation, caused by his occult powers his palace to burst into flames, which consumed, among other things, the Sannyasi's only cloth. The Sannyasi was greatly distressed by his loss; whereupon the King said to him:

" 'You had only a single piece of cloth, which can easily be replaced. Yet you are more distressed about your loss than I am about the destruction of my fine palace and its irreplaceable contents! ' "

## CHAPTER XII

Perhaps in some ways Mr. Gandhi's inability to realize his hope of establishing a "house of healing" was one of the great disappointments of these South African years. He had a natural love of healing and an instinctive knowledge of the fundamentals of good health. If these qualities had been properly trained and joined to experience, he might have become one of the great modern healers. As it was, his life was too broken up and occupied with political or social questions to allow him time for consecutive study or work of this nature. Yet many people, both European and Indian, came to him for advice and assistance, and many a person has been treated by him and received great benefit thereby. At the time I first met him he had become convinced of the value of the teaching of a German school of health culture, in connection with which he had installed in his house a Turkish cabinet-bath, a cold plunge and hip bath, and douches for external and internal use.

One interesting case that came to my notice was that of a Mr. C——, a connection of some European friends. Mr. C—— had been under medical treatment on and off for some months, and at last the doctors had ordered an immediate operation for appendicitis, much to the concern

*Mr. Gandhi*

of our friends, the D——s. Mr. D—— came to Mr. Gandhi and talked the matter over with him. I was not present at the conversation, but I know that the result was that Mr. D—— went straight from Mr. Gandhi at eleven o'clock at night to the lodgings of his friend, and carried him on his back to his own house (a distance of about a mile). There Mr. C—— was put to bed, douched, made to fast, treated, and nursed largely according to Mr. Gandhi's directions, and he made a speedy recovery from the acute attack. As soon as Mr. Gandhi thought he was fit, the patient was put on to a light non-flesh diet, and his strength was gradually built up. I knew of him for many years after that, but he stuck to the diet and internal cleanliness and never once had a relapse or a recurrence of the trouble that had made him so ill for months. Much of the advice the modern health societies and their medical supporters give and practise was given and practised by Mr. Gandhi over twenty-five years ago. To-day, it has become almost fashionable, and certainly respectable, to be a non-flesh eater. One might almost think that the evils of constipation had only just been discovered when one reads health hints in various journals. But long years ago Mr. Gandhi was well aware of these evils and worked on the principle of cleansing the internal machinery of the body, and giving it small quantities of pure food, at not

too infrequent intervals, to keep it in health.

The most remarkable cure that I knew of from the commencement of the Indian troubles to the end concerned Mrs. Gandhi herself. She was about forty at that time and had been ailing for a long while. She had consulted a doctor who treated her, but she grew worse, and eventually her condition, which had become serious, was diagnosed as pernicious anaemia. She was then living at Phoenix. Mr. Gandhi was in Johannesburg, and my husband and I were living in Durban. A night arrived when a hasty messenger came from Phoenix for us and the doctor. We got the last train to Phoenix and arrived, between eleven and midnight, at the bedside of Mrs. Gandhi, feeling very anxious.

We found her in a state of collapse, and whilst the doctor tried his restoratives, we, with the members of the family, waited. The night was got through, and as soon as possible Mr. Gandhi was telegraphed for. Mrs. Gandhi would not permit "Bapu" to be bothered so long as she had had the power to prevent it. But with her collapse things were taken out of her hands. Mr. Gandhi arrived next day, and in the meantime Mrs. Gandhi had rallied slightly. No possible hope, however, was given of her recovery, and at the most only a week or two of life could be looked for.

Mr. Gandhi put everything on one side and

devoted himself entirely to her. During one of her conscious periods he asked her if she trusted him absolutely. She replied in the affirmative. Then he said: "Will you let me try and help you?" This she agreed to, placing herself entirely in his hands. After this he stopped all medicines and refused to allow the doctor to try and force his patient to take meat extracts. The doctor abused Mr. Gandhi, who, however, stood firm. Then, almost in despair and anger, the doctor practically threw up the case.

For the next two weeks Mr. Gandhi scarcely left his wife's side. He fed her at intervals with pure lemon-juice, and no other food or drink of any kind was given to her. He poured his calm nerve-energy into her, and did for her all the little delicate duties that a very sick woman required. For these two weeks Mrs. Gandhi semi-consciously struggled for life, but by the end of that time a marked change was noticeable. The conscious periods were much longer, sleep became more natural, the dropsical swellings became less, and the eyes began to look clearer. Then, by slow degrees, a little fruit and milk were given, and lastly vegetables without condiments, and cereals. And without a single relapse, Mrs. Gandhi slowly but surely returned to health. Although that is over twenty years ago, she has not had a serious illness since, though she has endured a very difficult and strenuous life.

Mrs. Gandhi's recovery from pernicious anaemia at that time was almost in the nature of a miracle, for it was still looked upon as one of the fatal diseases, and very few cases indeed of recovery were on record. Certainly, so far as Mr. Gandhi knew, no previous case had been treated by lemon-juice, aided by what we to-day call mental healing. It was a great puzzle to the few medical men who knew or heard about it.

Of course, some of Mr. Gandhi's health experiments were neither wise nor beneficial. One such was made upon my first baby, who, when a tiny mite of about six weeks old, was subjected to the shock of a cold mud-plaster being put upon the abdomen to assist in regulating its natural functions. The child screamed and doubled up at the shock, then turned blue and grew stiff. I tore the plaster off and warmed the little body next to my own, and fortunately the child soon recovered. But on many other occasions, in dealing with older children and adults, I have known a number of cases where inflammation or congestion of a part of the body has been tremendously improved by the cold mud-compress as applied by Mr. Gandhi.

In looking back over those years I can see how an incident that occurred in the early days of my life in South Africa must have played a big part in Mr. Gandhi's dislike of orthodox doctors and their methods. A little boy of about twelve years



of age, son of some Indian friends, was ordered an operation. The parents feared this very much indeed, and when eventually they did agree to having the operation performed—a fairly simple one, but considered absolutely necessary for the child's health—they did so with the proviso that it should be done at home, and that Mr. Gandhi should be present to take care of the boy. So implicitly did these parents believe in him that they felt that the child would be safe from all harm if only he were there.

Unfortunately, the operation was not satisfactorily performed. The child died on the operating-table, and Mr. Gandhi believed that the surgeon had been neither skilful nor careful, and that he had been present at what almost amounted to the murder of an innocent child. The parents were inconsolable, and in some obscure way Mr. Gandhi seemed to feel himself responsible for the great sorrow that had come upon them. He felt that he had failed them. He returned home very much grieved and depressed, and for some days a cloud hung over his spirit.

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Considering Mr. Gandhi's character, it was most natural that he not only disbelieved in corporal punishment, but strictly forbade it in dealing with children. However tiresome and naughty a child might be, Mr. Gandhi believed in appealing

to the best in him and in endeavouring to arouse in the delinquent a sense of his own wrong-doing. Unfortunately, some children seem to be lacking in a "best" or moral sense. They create some of those problems that eternally crop up when those who believe in pure ethics are dealing with human nature.

A boy about fourteen years of age had been put in Mr. Gandhi's charge to educate, during one of his temporary school experiments. The boy was a great source of trouble; he seemed to be naturally and instinctively cruel and deceitful, two of the worst characteristics a child could display in Mr. Gandhi's eyes. The latter tried to shower extra care and affection upon the boy; he reasoned and pleaded with him, but in vain. One act of cruelty against other children or animals led to another, one lie to another. Eventually, my husband remonstrated with Mr. Gandhi for allowing the boy to run wild. Other people, he said, were complaining, quite rightly, about it. Mr. Gandhi sought for excuses, but my husband said that the boy needed a real corrective such as he would understand. Some physical punishment was evidently the only thing the child would respond to. At last, one day, the boy flung a cricket bat at a younger child's head, barely missing him. Mr. Gandhi, who witnessed the act, promptly asked my husband, who, too, was present, to thrash the boy. This my husband did,

and for a time a distinct improvement was noticeable. The boy put some sort of restraint upon himself, and it was quite clear that he understood physical pain when applied to himself, and did not like it.

Soon after this the boy returned to his parents, the little school was broken up, and nothing further was heard of him. But I often wondered if it were not almost a disappointment to Mr. Gandhi to know that the boy responded to brute-force, but was quite impervious to the gentler and more ethical methods of correction.

## CHAPTER XIII

Nearly three years elapsed ere I returned to South Africa. My husband had come to England, and after a few months here I accompanied him to India, where we stayed nearly a year.

On our arrival at Durban, arrangements were made that we should settle there. My husband was to practise law in Natal and continue, as in the past, to do some work for Phoenix. Mr. Gandhi was to remain chiefly in Johannesburg, but was also going to spend considerable time at Phoenix developing the ideas that he had nursed for so long.

Phoenix, during my absence, had undergone much change. Some of the old settlers had gone and new ones were installed. The plots of land were better cultivated, some kind of hedges had been planted, and nearly all the members of the community grew a considerable portion of their own vegetables. The soil being practically virgin and very rich, vegetables grew quite easily; salads and flowers of a fine variety were also cultivated with ease, and pineapples grew from their own prickly tops, when planted in the fertile soil.

One or two of the houses had been enlarged, and now had more furniture in them and attractive curtains at the windows. A large one-roomed building had been erected and fitted for a school-

room. Here one of the new Phoenixites, an English lady, conducted school for the children of the colony. She had had no previous experience of teaching, but such things did not worry Mr. Gandhi. Her heart was right, in his estimation, and her head would, therefore, be right also.

There were, at this time, about fourteen Indian children, between the ages of five and seventeen, boys and girls, attending the school. Some of these were boys placed in Mr. Gandhi's care for training. And this brought a new problem for him to deal with. The boys were adolescent and he had to study their developing sex-life. He thought a lot about it, and cogitated over the best means of training them in knowledge and purity. A series of books were procured, such as *What a Young Boy ought to know*, and I was asked to read them through and see which I thought the best to put into the hands of the boys to serve as a moral guide to them. But, alas! for hopes and theories; all the care and thought did not prevent one of those regrettable incidents common to human endeavour. Mr. Gandhi was shocked and grieved when he heard that one of the senior boys had attempted seriously to misbehave with one of the little girl-pupils.

The father of the girl was naturally angry beyond words, and refused to allow her to go to the school-house again. In fact, he kept her

closely guarded for the remainder of the time he stayed with his family at Phoenix. It was as though he blamed Mr. Gandhi for the deplorable occurrence. The boy himself, when asked to explain why he had behaved in such a manner, said "he could not help it, he felt like that." Mr. Gandhi realized that it was impossible for him to deal with the boy unless he could keep him always under his personal control. This not being possible, the lad was sent back to his father, and the incident was closed—not, however, without leaving its mark upon the community and setting up disruptive forces.

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It might seem that, with the erection of the school-room, a suitable meeting-place for the community would also have been procured. But this was not the case, for Mr. Gandhi's large living-room remained the centre and meeting-place of the community. Here, every Sunday evening, all the members gathered together for a kind of religious service. This service was an interesting blend of East and West. We were fortunate in possessing a nice organ, and one or two of the English members were able to play a little.

Mr. Gandhi usually opened the proceedings with a reading from the "Bhagavad Gita" and would also read passages from the New Testa-

ment. Then there would be English hymns, in which all would join, and some Gujarati sacred songs would be chanted by those that knew the language. Mr. Gandhi joined heartily in the musical part of the service, thoroughly enjoying the hymn-singing. We had a little hymn-book, specially arranged for our service, containing some eighteen hymns taken from all sources, and printed and bound at the Phoenix Press.

There were two great favourites of Mr. Gandhi, of which, through all the years I knew him, he never wearied. The first was the hymn of consecration:

Take my life, and let it be  
Consecrated, Lord, to Thee.  
Take my moments and my days;  
Let them flow in endless praise.

Take my hands and let them move  
At the impulse of Thy love.  
Take my feet and let them be  
Swift and beautiful for Thee.

Take my voice and let me sing  
Always, only, for my King.  
Take my lips and let them be  
Filled with messages for Thee.

Take my silver and my gold;  
Not one mite would I withhold.  
Take my intellect and use  
Every power as Thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it Thine.  
 It shall be no longer mine.  
 Take my heart; it is Thine own.  
 It shall be Thy royal throne.

Take my love, my Lord, I pour  
 At Thy feet its treasure-store.  
 Take myself, and I will be  
 Ever, only, all for Thee!

Perhaps in no place in the world would those beautiful words of consecration be sung with greater fervour and meaning than in that little lamp-lit corrugated-iron room, where Mr. Gandhi was the centre of the life of an assembled congregation of about twenty people, from East and West.

The other hymn was one that he has often quoted when he has felt himself surrounded by difficulties:

Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,  
     Lead Thou me on;  
 The night is dark, and I am far from home,  
     Lead Thou me on.  
 Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see  
 The distant scene; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou  
     Shouldst lead me on;  
 I loved to choose and see my path; but now  
     Lead Thou me on.  
 I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,  
 Pride ruled my will: remember not past years.



So long Thy power hath blest me, sure it still  
     Will lead me on,  
 O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent till  
     The night is gone;  
 And with the morn those Angel faces smile,  
     Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

All loved these Sunday evening services. It seemed to bring the community closer together and gave a feeling of Sabbath peace to the day.

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Among the many young people committed to Mr. Gandhi's care from time to time was a girl of about twenty years of age, whom I will call Lila. She was educated, clever and attractive, and Mr. Gandhi seemed quite pleased to play guardian to her. She talked high idealism, had an understanding and sympathy for all the reforms that "Bapu" planned, and busied herself in teaching and little acts of service to those about her. So all was apparently going well. Then a bomb fell. One day, on seeing Mr. Gandhi, I was shocked at his appearance. He looked so depressed and ill. He greeted me, but without his usual warmth and smiling welcome.

"What is the matter? Are you not well or has something happened?" I asked, somewhat perturbed, as soon as we had sat down in a quiet corner alone. I had never seen him look so sad and troubled before. Even when affairs in the

community had looked their darkest, his faith in the right working out of a Divine plan upheld him and gave him serenity and hope. But this day he looked as though the light had been quenched within him; he sat slack, with all the fight out of him.

"The worst has happened!" he replied tonelessly.

"The worst?" I echoed, mystified. "What do you mean?"

"A dreadful thing has happened among ourselves."

"But what is it? Please tell me what has happened!" I exclaimed, now much alarmed.

"Lila has been guilty of destroying her chastity. She has had physical relationship with N——!" said Mr. Gandhi.

"That is indeed terrible! Are you sure it is true?"

"Only too true! She has confessed all to me."

"Still, I don't quite understand," I said. "How could it happen? When did it happen? I thought you knew how she spent all her time, and where she went to. How, then, could this have taken place?"

"I thought I knew Lila myself and knew her movements, but it seems I did not," he added mournfully. "When I thought she was simply taking a walk with her book, she was meeting N——, with the result I have told you."

"Has it been going on for long?" I asked.

"Yes, some time," he replied; "some weeks, at least."

We sat silent for a few minutes. I scarcely knew what to say, for I realized how dreadful the knowledge of this must be to him. I realized, too, how it would hurt him in the eyes of others, if once a rumour of it got abroad, and I wondered if we could keep it to ourselves. But I knew that was impossible as soon as he spoke again.

"Several people knew or suspected," he said. "I seem to be almost the only one quite ignorant of what was going on around me. And now what am I to say to her family? For I am responsible to them for her!"

"But surely you are not blaming yourself for this, are you? How could you possibly have suspected that such a shocking thing could happen?"

"Whom else should I blame, if not myself? I must have neglected something. The responsibility must fall on me."

"I do not think so," I said emphatically, and I felt myself growing indignant that this girl to whom Mr. Gandhi had given such loving care, of whom he had spoken so proudly, should have deceived and betrayed him so badly. I did not feel the same about N——, who was a few years younger than Lila, and knew little or nothing about girls. It was, I felt sure, a case of deliberate seduction on her part.

"Of course, you cannot be held blameworthy," I continued. "Lila was not ignorant. She knew what she was doing. She has behaved disgracefully! It is dreadful for you, I know; but no one can hold you responsible for it. What are you going to do next?"

"I must tell her family at once, and must accept their rebuke. Lila is full of remorse. She realizes how wicked she has been, and has done nothing but cry for the last twenty-four hours, and is starving herself."

"Well, a fast will do her good," I said. "I have no sympathy at all with her. But I am sorry for N——. What could he know of sex-passion before this? He has just been trapped. However, what are you going to do about him?"

"I do not know what to do about either of them yet. They must both punish themselves. Of course, I cannot trust them to meet each other again, unless someone else is present, and I cannot send either away from my care."

My thoughts travelled to a possible further cause of worry.

"Is there to be a baby?" I asked.

"No, thank God! At least that much is spared me," replied Mr. Gandhi fervently.

"Well, that is something to be thankful for! It is, indeed, dreadful enough for you without that to complete it."

"I have told Lila that I must share the burden

of her guilt, and I hope by fasting to expiate it."

So we continued to talk, but the facts remained, and we could not talk them away. I left Mr. Gandhi with a feeling of deep sorrow for his suffering. I knew how enormously he valued chastity, and how he felt himself responsible for these two young people under his care and whom he had yet been unable to keep from falling into temptation. The sense of resentment against Lila remained with me. She had not even the excuse of pleading a great love for N——, and, furthermore, she was already married!

More than a fortnight went by before I saw Mr. Gandhi again. He looked thin and haggard and was only just recovering from a long and rigid fast. After we had talked for a little while he begged me to see Lila, who, he said, was behaving splendidly now.

"She has acknowledged her sin before us all; she has fasted with me, taken off all her jewellery, put on the garb of mourning, and had her hair cropped short as a sign of guilt and remorse. I have great hopes of her again," he went on. "Perhaps this acknowledgment of her sin will purge her soul of much that was dross in it, and she will, in fact, be the finer for it, when she has fully expiated the harm done."

I did not accept this new version of her character, nor did I very much want to see her at the moment; but I did not feel that I could refuse

Mr. Gandhi's request, so, after a few minutes' silence, "Very well," I said.

"You will find her in the garden," replied Mr. Gandhi.

I turned and went.

She greeted me quite cheerfully, displayed not the least sign of embarrassment, and, so far as I could see, showed no real remorse either. She certainly wore a dress denoting mourning, and had her hair cropped, but I did not feel that she regarded herself as a guilty person. Mr. Gandhi was immeasurably more conscious of her guilt than she was herself. On my way to the garden I had wondered what I should say to her when we met, but I need not have done so. She took the lead in the conversation, and almost at once commenced to lecture me on tea-drinking. She knew I was fond of tea and that Mr. Gandhi often teased me about the vice of tea-drinking. She, too, had given it up since her "confession." I was so nonplussed by her attack that I had very little to say in reply, and did not stay long with her. When I returned to Mr. Gandhi I told him frankly that I was not impressed by her supposed remorse.

"I don't," I said, "believe Lila is really suffering at all. In fact, I wonder why she confessed to you."

"It was not quite a voluntary confession," slowly replied Mr. Gandhi. "Some of our friends

came to me and reported what they had actually seen; they thought I ought to know. I was incredulous at first, but when I taxed her with it she broke down and cried bitterly, and confessed everything."

"I cannot pretend I have any sympathy with her. It is not only the breaking of the moral code that offends me, it is everything about it; the way it has been done and all the other things."

"Do not let us be hard or censorious," Mr. Gandhi said gently. "We do not know the weakness or temptations of others. We may not judge them. We may condemn the act, but we may not condemn the actor."

"I don't want to judge Lila; but she is not a heroine in a tragedy."

"Yet we may remember the story of Mary Magdalene."

What exactly passed between the father and Mr. Gandhi I never learned. I did know, however, that soon the girl was returned to her father, and ultimately went back to her husband, so that Mr. Gandhi's responsibility towards her ceased. From the boy, who was virtually an ignorant partner in her guilt, Mr. Gandhi exacted a solemn vow that he should not marry for some years and that he would live a strictly celibate life, until such time as he, Mr. Gandhi, should release him from his vow.

## CHAPTER XIV

The Indian community was not the only sufferer from the proposed repressive Asiatic legislation that was destroying the peace of South Africa. A number of Chinese, small traders and market-gardeners, were also affected, and adopted the policy of Passive Resistance under Mr. Gandhi's advice and guidance. They, too, had a leader, a very clever man, who was in constant consultation with the Indian leaders. When, therefore, Mr. Gandhi reached a verbal agreement with the Government, an important condition of which was afterwards repudiated by General Smuts, the Chinese leader accepted the same terms, and just as Mr. Gandhi received ill treatment at the hands of some of his more fanatical followers, who did not understand or accept the compromise that was the basis of the agreement between the contending parties, so did the Chinese leader. His life was threatened, and he knew that it was no idle threat. For days he had to remain in hiding, seeking the house first of one of his faithful followers, then of another, and sleeping where he could. Mr. Gandhi had been able to deal with the malcontents among his people, but Mr. Leong Quinn, our Chinese friend, was not so successful.

We were all very anxious and disturbed for his safety, and earnest discussions concerning him



took place. One day I was told that word had been sent to Mr. Quinn to seek refuge in our house. I cannot pretend that I was enamoured of the idea. I had visions of a band of people, intent on murder, entering my home and doing their foul deed, while I would stand helplessly by with my baby. I may say at once that Mr. Quinn never accepted our house as a hiding-place, and soon the trouble in the Chinese community calmed down. But the talks about it are of interest.

One day I said to Mr. Gandhi: "But supposing Mr. Quinn does come here and is hiding in our house, and some of his enemies come to the door asking for him. Am I supposed to say: 'Mr. Quinn is hiding in the cupboard,' or should I try to put them off by some subterfuge?"

"What do you think you should do?" asked Mr. Gandhi.

"I am inclined to think I should try and put them off."

"And if they asked you point-blank if Mr. Quinn were in your house, what then?"

"I believe I should be justified in denying it."

"But that would be lying to them."

"I know it would be, but my sin, if any, would be simple beside the sin of permitting a man to be murdered, to whom we had given refuge."

"You are a Jesuit in your reasoning," objected Mr. Gandhi. "You are saying that the end justifies the means."

"I do not mind your calling me a Jesuit. I think it is often so difficult to know what is right and what is wrong. It is often a choice between two wrongs, and one naturally chooses the lesser."

"You may never choose wrong that good may come of it," concluded Mr. Gandhi.

On another occasion, during this period, the question of right and wrong came up for discussion. Mr. Gandhi had again made a statement about keeping to the narrow path of absolute truth.

"But is not Truth only one attribute of the Divine?" I said. "There are others."

"If you break one law, you break them all," replied Mr. Gandhi.

"Yet to break what I believe to be a Divine law may be the highest sacrifice, if in so doing I am helping to save someone I love, even though I myself pay the price."

"Do you think you can save another by committing a wrong act yourself?"

"I do not know about it in the absolute; probably none of us does. But I think men and women reason differently about what you call sin. A woman would not hesitate to take upon herself the sin of one she loved, even if she went to hell for it. She might say, if asked by the Lord about something: 'Lord, I did it. I alone am to blame'; and she would rejoice in taking the burden upon herself. You seem to think she would say: 'It

was he whom I loved that did it.' In the interests of truth I must say that."

"No, no, that is exaggeration!" smilingly said Mr. Gandhi. "You know that is not my meaning. But our standards must be set right, otherwise we should be always floundering in the mire."

That was a frequent and characteristic remark of his—"We must set our standards right!"

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Another incident that taught me a big lesson arose out of a discussion that took place on a later occasion. Mr. Gandhi had discovered that a mutual friend had lied to him and deceived him. He was telling me about it and expressing great pain and disappointment. I was sorry for him, but at the time I think I was more sorry for the culprit. I knew how much she valued Mr. Gandhi's good opinion, and I knew her temperament well enough to know that some actions, which Mr. Gandhi would call evil, came naturally to her, and that she would hide such things from him if possible. His condemnation of her would cut her off from him, and cause a deep and lasting wound.

"I know she was wrong," I said, "but I do think you ask too much of people. You ask more than they are able to give. Then, in self-defence, they try to deceive you. If she had cared less she would not have acted in the way she has."

"She has persistently lied to me," he replied, "then tried to excuse herself when she knew I had found her out."

"Yes, I know she has done all that, but I do not think she was really conscious of the wrong she was doing. She values your friendship so much, and she did not wish you to think her wicked."

"So," he said, rather sadly, "she preferred to lie to me than trust me with the truth. You cannot make excuses for her like that!"

"But I do. Her excuse is that what she was doing did not seem so wrong to her. She knew she was trying to deceive you about it afterwards, but even that I believe seemed almost right to her. You have so often said it is the thought that makes an action wrong or right; so that if we do not know we are doing evil, surely we are not evil. I am sure she did not look upon what she was doing as really wicked, only perhaps a little unwise. She . . ."

"Ah!" he interrupted, "that is the worst of it. You have condemned her out of your own mouth. To do evil and know one's act is evil at least places one with those who know good from evil and right from wrong. There is hope for such a one, who does wrong even deliberately, knowing it to be wrong. But for one who commits an evil action, not even knowing the action is evil, there is no hope. One can regret a wrong act, and

determine never to commit such an error again. But if one has not yet awakened to the consciousness of right and wrong, if one cannot distinguish between good and evil, one is not aware of the God within. Such people are no higher than the brutes of the field, who live according to their nature and do not have to deal with moral values."

I had nothing to say in reply to that, so was silent. The truth of Mr. Gandhi's words made a deep impression upon me. I never afterwards felt that I could urge in extenuation of a fault: "I did not know." I realized, as I had never done before, that Mr. Gandhi had enunciated a great fundamental truth; that according to our consciousness of right and wrong were we placed on the respective rungs of the ladder of evolution. Mr. Gandhi would not blame an animal for living the law of the jungle; that was acting according to its nature and right for it. He would not blame one of the children of the race of men for behaving with an unawakened consciousness. But from those who claimed that they belonged to the advanced higher orders of mankind he demanded a life to be lived in accordance with that claim, and one of its great essentials was Truth and Honour.

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As I have said, it was most painful for Mr. Gandhi to realize that he had been deliberately deceived by those whom he trusted, and it was,

in fact, with difficulty that he could believe that he had been wantonly and intentionally misled by anyone who called him friend. This attitude of mind, quite apart from its effect upon others, often gave rise to difficult situations for me. I knew that I seemed sometimes to act with suspicion or a queer form of jealousy when I remained silent, while Mr. Gandhi and my husband would wax eloquent in their praises of this one or that. My silent disagreement or even disapproval was rather a trial to them.

Mr. Gandhi, of course, had a large number of youthful followers and many of these were well known to me. They used to visit me, or I would see them at meetings and elsewhere, and we would talk over the events of the day. They had no fear of me or of my criticism, and could and did talk freely of themselves and others. Much of the struggle, so grim and serious to others, was to them a rather joyous adventure, as it would be to youth elsewhere. Often I was laughingly made the recipient of "secrets," and as I was trusted by these young men, I certainly could not give them away.

During the later phases of the struggle, Tolstoy Farm, a new Colony run on something like community lines, came into existence, about twenty miles south of Johannesburg. The estate belonged to Mr. Hermann Kallenbach, a farmer-architect, and a devoted follower of Mr. Gandhi,

at whose disposal he placed it, primarily to accommodate the families of those who had gone to jail for the sake of conscience. As in other places, here, too, Mr. Gandhi sought to put some of his cherished theories into practice. The men's quarters were quite separate from the women's. Even the married men were separated from their wives and were supposed to be celibate while staying at Tolstoy Farm.

The food was of the simplest kind. All such (so-called) luxuries as tea and coffee, sugar and jam, condiments, including salt (which Mr. Gandhi most strongly objected to at this time), were forbidden in the diet list. Most of the colonists probably obeyed the rules, but there were some who did not approve of so austere a life, and a few of these, including some of the youths of my acquaintance, told me how they managed. They had—like the schoolboy—tuck boxes, and when the colony had retired for the night, the tuck boxes would be brought out, and succulent dishes, including the forbidden things, would be prepared and enjoyed. I am afraid I rather sympathized with these young people. It was so natural that they should desire something more than frugal monastic fare. Some of them were only lads of eighteen to twenty-one. When, one day, Mr. Gandhi was eulogizing the natural simplicity of these young fellows, extolling with simple delight their marked preference for a

plain and saltless diet to the highly seasoned dishes they had been accustomed to, I did not reply.

"You are silent," he said. "Do you not admire the sacrifice these young men are making?"

"I admire them," I replied, "but I would not call it sacrifice. I think they are rather enjoying the whole thing. They certainly seem happy enough."

"That is the beauty of it! (A common phrase with Mr. Gandhi). They are happy. They are such splendid young men, simple and loyal," observed Mr. Gandhi.

"Yes," I murmured dubiously, but without conviction.

"What is the matter?" asked Mr. Gandhi. "There is something on your mind, I know."

"Nothing, at least nothing to talk about," I replied.

And Mr. Gandhi never knew that tea and coffee, sugar and salt, and a dozen other delectable but forbidden things were smuggled on to the Farm and thoroughly enjoyed there.

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Tolstoy Farm was also the setting for another snake incident. This time my husband, Mr. Kallenbach and another man (a young Hindu) were the chief characters in the story. Mrs. Gandhi at the time was accommodated with be-



fitting simplicity in part of a disused stable. Here my husband and Mr. Kallenbach visited her one day, and whilst the latter was conversing with her, my husband strolled to the other end of the barn-like place and, glancing casually into a zinc bath lying there, noticed a deadly snake coiled up inside, comfortably asleep. My husband quietly made his way to Mr. Kallenbach, explained the situation briefly to him and sought his advice. Mr. Kallenbach, engaging Mrs. Gandhi in conversation in order to distract her attention, whispered to my husband to get a pick-handle that was handy and kill the snake. My husband, who had a horror of taking life, was in a quandary. He raised the pick-handle, intending to bring it down upon the sleeping reptile's head. But the blow never fell, for his arm remained paralysed in mid-air and refused its task. The movement, however, disturbed the creature, which now began to uncoil. At this moment, the young Hindu came along, observed the situation, assisted my husband to carry the bath, with its now active occupant, outside the stable, snatched up the pick-handle and dealt the reptile its death-blow. Mrs. Gandhi was much relieved at her compatriot's readiness. I do not now recall Mr. Gandhi's reaction when he came to hear of the episode.

## CHAPTER XV

I have mentioned on an earlier page that Mr. Gandhi thought a great deal of the Women's Suffrage movement in England.

"Why don't you start something among the Indian women here?" my husband said to me one day in Johannesburg, during one of Mr. Gandhi's prison spells.

"They would not be permitted to join the women's movement here," I replied. "You know that."

"I do not mean that you should attempt to join them up with the Suffrage movement here. But why not form an organization amongst the Indian women themselves, for general public purposes?"

"But what could I do," I asked, "that would be of service or interest? Most of the women don't speak English and some of them never go out into public life at all. So I don't suppose they would come to a meeting were I to call one."

"Why not try?" replied my husband. "Get some of them together, and see what you can do. Those that do speak English can translate anything you say to those that don't."

"I will think about it," I said. "But if I do attempt it, you will have to help me to get the women together. I do not know who has a wife

here and who has not, and I do not know where they live."

"I can manage that for you," was the reply. "You think out what you want to do, and get a scheme ready in your mind to discuss with the women. I am sure it would please Mr. Gandhi."

The result of this conversation was that some forty women attended my first meeting, which took place in a kind of hall lent for the occasion by one of the leading Indian business-men. The women, wives of petty store-keepers and hawkers, many of them with babies in their arms, were, I soon found, most anxious to hear all about the political struggle in which their men-folk were engaged; and I gave a brief account of current events. All kinds of questions were asked me. What was Mr. Gandhi going to do about this, and what about that? I answered as well as I could, and then settled in to talk on some other subject, telling them something of the women's struggle for political freedom in England. Finally, arrangements were made that we should meet fortnightly. From this small beginning grew the Transvaal Indian Women's Association that played so big a part in the last phase of the Passive Resistance struggle.

When Mr. Gandhi came out of jail and heard of the new women's movement, he was delighted and warmly praised my effort.

"The women," he said, "will strengthen the

hands of the men enormously. I see that, more and more, women are going to play an important part in the affairs of the world. They will be a great asset to any movement."

"Don't you anticipate divisions in the household when men and women are both in public life?" I asked.

"That may be," he replied.

"They will not both think alike, you know. A wife may think very differently from her husband, and won't that rather destroy the harmony of the household?"

"Women can destroy that now," he replied sententiously. "When they do not like something the husband does, they can quarrel, and sulk, and weep."

"Oh, surely not in Indian homes," I said teasingly. "Surely such disagreeable things don't happen in Indian homes!"

He smiled. "I have learned more of passive resistance, as a weapon of power, from Indian women than from anyone else. Even Ba (Mrs. Gandhi) has taught me that I cannot compel her to do anything she absolutely and resolutely refuses to do. She just passively resists me and I am helpless!"

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One of our Indian acquaintances, a man over forty years of age, fairly well educated, and a

supposed follower of Mr. Gandhi, had just returned to South Africa from a visit to India, bringing with him a little girl-wife, a child of about thirteen. Mr. Gandhi was most vexed about the matter and expressed strong disgust at the man's conduct. It was a very unusual case in South Africa, and Mr. Gandhi did not know quite what to do. There were no relatives of the girl at hand for him to appeal to, so that the girl for a year or two might have been removed from her husband. He felt he could do nothing, and was accordingly rather despondent.

"It is disgraceful," I said, "that such a marriage should have been permitted in any country. She is only a child."

"It is, indeed, disgraceful," replied Mr. Gandhi sorrowfully.

"But will they live in wedlock?" I asked.

"I am afraid so," answered Mr. Gandhi.

"The man should be whipped," I said. "It is an outrage to take a child of that age in marriage."

"I know how you feel about it. Your heart is sad for the child. My heart aches, too."

"And Indian law permits it!" I said indignantly.

"The laws relating to marriage in most countries permit a man to marry a young girl."

"Yes, I know the laws do, but custom is against it," I retorted.

"Ah, there is much for me to do when I return to the Motherland," he replied.

"There is certainly need for a lot of social reform work," I said. "You know I could not work with the Suffrage movement here. For one thing, I could not join in the general denunciation of men; but I do realize how, everywhere, women have been exploited under man-made laws. It makes me angry!"

"You are right to be angry," replied Mr. Gandhi. "Even Christ permitted righteous anger, and you are angry at the possible suffering to be inflicted upon a helpless child. But do you not think that women have a share in the blame, too?"

"No, no," I cried, "I cannot believe that a mother would willingly give her little daughter of twelve or so to be the wife of a robust man of over forty. It is not natural."

"But she does do so. She has done so. This marriage was probably arranged by the women of the family. Certainly it was accepted by them, and it is women who must exert themselves to alter these things."

"How can they?" I asked. "What freedom have they to alter these dreadful customs that priests and laws have forced upon them?"

"Yet they must," replied Mr. Gandhi. "They must rouse themselves to do their share in the work of reform. It is for them to set the standard of life. It is their privilege and their duty."

"But what can they do?" I asked again. "What power have they in India?"

"A great deal more than you think! If nothing else, they can refuse to have anything to do with these horrible things, and in refusing to be a partner in man's shame, the conduct of life must be raised, for men will have to listen when women refuse to obey."

"But would not force be brought to bear upon them then?" I urged. "They would be broken, as they have been before in the world's history."

"Perhaps," he replied.

"And what then?" I asked.

"They can die," he answered, "and what man can prevail against a dead woman?"

I am reminded by this conversation, that recalls to me one of Olive Schreiner's "Dreams," in which she insists that woman can break her bonds and rise to freedom only by her own efforts and after many weary struggles, of Mr. Gandhi's friendship with that great woman who always gave him loyal encouragement in his task. My husband tells the story how, upon his return to England in the latter part of the War, he called upon her during her uncomfortable exile in this country, and the first thing she asked him, with almost girlish eagerness, was: "So you have seen Gandhi recently? How is the dear boy?"

## CHAPTER XVI

We had scarcely been nine months in Durban when once again a crisis arose in the Indian community, this time of a much more serious nature and spreading its effects more widely than the previous ones.

We had, in the meantime, taken a nice little villa in a high and pleasant spot in Durban. My two sisters had come out to me, and I was settling down to some kind of constructive life. Mrs. Gandhi and the family were fairly content at Phoenix, and Mr. Gandhi as before spent his time between Johannesburg and Phoenix, attending to his legal office and keeping his attention upon every important detail in the life of his people in South Africa.

The eminent Indian statesman, Mr. G. K. Gokhale, had also paid his visit to the country, and during his stay Mr. Gandhi had devoted a very great deal of time to looking after him. As Mr. Gokhale was suffering from diabetes he was on a very strict diet, and many were the times that I helped Mr. Gandhi to prepare food for him. He was staying in a house quite near to us, so that it was easy for me to go daily to see that the house was kept in order and suitable food provided for Mr. Gokhale. One item of the diet Mr. Gandhi would nearly always get ready



himself. It was the preparing of some sliced potatoes. These had to be rendered into charcoal by means of putting them between hot embers. Sometimes the potatoes were completely burnt, and sometimes they dried but did not char, and both Mr. Gandhi and I would anxiously watch the preparation of this article of food. Mr. Gokhale was very fastidious, too, about the neatness and correct folding of the Mahratta scarf that he wore across his shoulders, and Mr. Gandhi would carefully iron and crease it with his own hands. Indeed, towards Mr. Gokhale he behaved as towards a revered elder brother, and he looked upon him as his political guide and teacher.

This last crisis, to which I have referred, seemed to develop very rapidly, so that, within a short time, many hundreds of Indians were under arrest, and practically all the senior men were in prison.

The women and younger men of the community were now virtually alone to carry on the fight for the right to live as free people in an organized society. Mrs. Gandhi threw herself into the work and, with a small group of women, was also arrested and sentenced to three months' imprisonment.

My husband had again been asked by Mr. Gokhale to go to India to represent to the Government there and the Indian people the condition of affairs in South Africa. Before going, he was

anxious to see Mr. Gandhi and have a final consultation with him. With that object in view he journeyed about a hundred miles to pick up Mr. Gandhi on his historic march from Natal into the Transvaal with some thousands of "passive resisters." It happened that Mr. Gandhi was arrested just after my husband reached him, and, realizing the urgency of the moment, my husband immediately took charge of the then leaderless army. The next day he, too, was arrested for "aiding and abetting," and I was hastily summoned to the scene of action, and was present when they were both convicted and sentenced, returning immediately thereafter to Durban.

Then, at the earnest request of the community, I started off to India in my husband's place at twenty-four hours' notice, but was turned back at Delagoa Bay by a cable from Mr. Gokhale, telling me that an official mission was leaving India immediately for South Africa to investigate affairs, and that he was sending Mr. C. F. Andrews to help unofficially.

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Events now moved very rapidly, and within a few weeks I was making another journey up to the Transvaal, this time to meet Mr. Gandhi and my husband, who had been released after five weeks' incarceration, owing to the setting

up of a Commission to investigate the Indian grievances. All seemed happy and full of enthusiasm at the turn events had taken. Mr. Gandhi expressed great satisfaction and enjoyed a quip at my going off to India as I did, without intending to consult anyone about my movements. He teased me about deserting my husband and children, and made some remarks about women breaking free as soon as the strong hand of the husband was removed. As a matter of fact, a journalist friend, anxious that I should have my husband's authority to replace him, had had his permission obtained, through the usual official channels, during his imprisonment.

Soon after this I accompanied Mr. Gandhi to meet his wife and the other Indian women on their release from jail, and saw the almost shy look in Mrs. Gandhi's eyes as she waited for her husband's approbation of what she had done.

The agreement which put an end to those long years of suffering was at last arrived at and the day came when my husband and I and Mr. Gandhi met together to discuss our personal future. Mr. Gandhi had been for some time turning his eyes longingly towards India, and now, feeling himself free to do so, he determined to say "good-bye" to South Africa as soon as he had consolidated the ground that the struggle had won. Some time previous to the ending of the struggle, I had been promised that, at its

successful conclusion, I should have the choice of either remaining in South Africa, where Mr. Gandhi would endeavour to see us comfortably settled, or return with my little family to England to live. I chose to return to England. The years I had spent in South Africa had been too full of pain and unrest for me to wish to continue there. So arrangements were made for our return, the house was put in the hands of an agent, and an auction of our furniture and personal belongings was advertised to take place. Friends had been written to in England to seek for and rent a house for us. The proposed marriage of one of my sisters was hurried along, so that it could take place ere we left.

Then, one morning, a very characteristic letter arrived from Mr. Gandhi. A colleague, upon whom he had relied to give guidance to the community in his absence in India, had suddenly decided to settle in East Africa. He had been earnestly thinking, he wrote, and praying for guidance, and had come to the conclusion that he and my husband could not, in the circumstances, both leave South Africa at that time. One of them would have to stay to help the community and see that the Government fulfilled its agreement with them. But the choice could not be his or my husband's, it must be mine. They had both given their word to me that I should have a home in England and they must honour their

word unless I released them from it. The position was therefore that either I kept Mr. Gandhi in South Africa, when I knew he felt a strong call to return to his Motherland, or I must give up something that for so long, through many dark days, I had held on to as a future reward. Mr. Gandhi had admonished my husband not to put any pressure upon me, but to leave me to choose entirely for myself, and then pathetically and naïvely said: "I have spent many more years than you in public service in this country and long to go, but if Millie does not wish to stay here, I must."

So, as before, the onus was put upon me to choose. I did not, however, feel that I had any freedom of choice. I knew that it meant that I had to surrender my hopes and to stay on in South Africa. I wrote and told Mr. Gandhi that we would remain, and my husband almost immediately left Durban to take over Mr. Gandhi's legal office and other affairs in Johannesburg. The sale of the household effects was proceeded with. I settled up affairs in Durban, and went on my way once more to start a new home. Mr. Gandhi, with my husband, met me at the station. He praised my action in arranging to free him, and said he was sure that my sacrifice would bring its own reward.

Mr. Gandhi's arrangements for leaving were hastily made and soon the day of his departure

came. He expressed a wish to have our elder child, by that time a little boy of six, to sleep with him, as he had done as a baby, to enable him to have a quiet last talk with him.

"You will be too tired," I had objected, "to be bothered with Waldo, and you will have no time."

"If he is there with me, I shall find time somehow," he replied.

So Waldo went to the little house where Mr. Gandhi was staying with Mrs. Gandhi and was given a mattress on the floor beside the one Mr. Gandhi was to occupy, and was fast asleep long before the latter was free to retire. Both, however, awakened about four o'clock in the morning and commenced to talk. Later on Mr. Gandhi told me that they had talked for nearly two hours of the nature of God, and that he had nothing to teach Waldo, for he was very near to God himself.

I accompanied the party, with my husband, to Capetown, and we were there paraded in carriages round the town preceded by a brass band which played a melody that I knew as "We won't go home till morning," but which probably the musicians believed to be something quite different and most suitable to the occasion. Mr. Gandhi sat patiently through it all, seeming neither pleased nor sorry at anything that was happening or had happened.

As I watched the boat steam out I felt an intolerable sense of blankness come into my life. A chapter filled with movement and intensity of thought and emotion had definitely closed. That was in 1914, and war was declared on the day that the boat on which Mr. Gandhi was travelling reached England, which was the goal of the first part of his journey.

## CHAPTER XVII

It was during the third year of the Great War that I met Mr. Gandhi again, and this time we met in India. The intervening time had been a very busy and anxious one, and my husband and I, like so many other reformers and idealists, had shed some of the illusions we had formerly cherished. But all the world was suffering so badly at this period that our anxieties seemed small by comparison, and our life calm by contrast with the lives of others, and with our own previous years of turmoil and stress.

Recognizing that we had done our job, Mr. Gandhi had by now approved of our leaving South Africa to return to our homeland to take up our residence there. Previous, however, to going to England, my husband had to go to India to attend to some important matters. He preceded me by a few months, met me on my arrival in Bombay, and after a few days there we proceeded to Ahmedabad to see Mr. Gandhi. We were not to stay at the Ashram, where he was living, but with some Indian friends in the neighbourhood, and were to see him daily.

I knew that during these three years he had travelled a long way in thought, but I somehow felt he had become more Indian and less universal, and that I should personally find him



different from the "brother" I had known in South Africa. But this was not so. To me he was the same; kind, gentle, and sympathetic to all the little things of my life, as well as the bigger problems.

I noticed, however, that his natural asceticism had become more pronounced. More and more he was demanding of those around him that they should seek the things of the spirit. Yet, the queer anomaly of it, his brain was seeing life politically, and plans for the amelioration of the misery of poverty and sorrow that he found in India were filling his horizon.

I saw him now in what was practically the dress of a Gujarati peasant—a loin-cloth to cover him to the knees and a voluminous piece of coarse cotton fabric that he wore as a shawl to cover the upper part of the body. On his feet, when walking in the street, he wore a clumsy kind of sandal; otherwise his feet were bare.

What different phases in Mr. Gandhi's mental career had been proclaimed by the clothes he wore! Each costume, I think, denoted an attitude of mind. Yet with what a curious detachment he wore them! Each seemed to be but a fugitive expression of him, and behind it often one sensed a human being, who wore form itself as though he would readily and easily cast it off, and stand naked before his God. When I first saw him in South Africa, he wore a black professional turban,

an easy lounge suit of a neat patterned material, a faint blue stripe on a darker ground being rather a favourite with him, a stiff collar and tie, with shoes and socks for outdoor wear. When later I met him in London, he looked distinguished in the conventional dress of a pre-War English gentleman—a silk hat, well-cut morning-coat, smart shoes and socks; and years afterwards I gave away a number of dress-shirts that he had discarded from his wardrobe of this period.

Then again, in South Africa, he returned to the lounge suit, but now a ready-made, rather sloppy one, shoes more clumsy, and no longer starched collars for ordinary wear. During the latter part of his life there, this gave way to a combination of East and West whenever possible—a pair of trousers accompanying a shirt-like garment, and nearly always sandals. Then the final change, a loin-cloth of home-spun material and a shawl to throw round his shoulders when he considered it necessary to do so. Some of his teeth had gone, “through taking too much acid fruit,” he told me.

The absence of teeth made a big difference in his appearance. One felt almost sorry to see him laugh, because of showing the black gaps in the mouth. Later on he had a false set made, but he only wore them when compelled to do so, to assist in mastication when eating.

Mrs. Gandhi had lost some of her English,

but looked happy in the busy life she led. As the eldest son's wife had recently died, she had his three young children with her to look after, as well as all the other work that normally fell upon her.

After looking over the Ashram and discussing it, we talked of the War. Mr. Gandhi was perplexed as to his exact position in regard to it. War and bloodshed filled him with horror. He saw no reason why men and nations could not settle their differences by other means than killing each other. Yet he did not at this period openly advocate opposing the Germans by passively resisting them. He talked of the "Gita" and the incident in it where Arjuna was urged by Sri Krishna to fight his enemies, even though he always interpreted the teaching of the Sacred Book in a spiritual sense and refused to accept Sri Krishna's admonitions as a literal injunction. Later on, he preached to his people that they should enrol themselves for work in the army.

"But how can you advocate war?" I asked him one day, when we were talking.

"To refrain from action because you are afraid of the act or the results it may bring to you is not virtue," he replied.

"Then what do you advise?" I asked.

"To take part in the work until you have learned your lesson from it," he replied. "When you have really learned that, you will no longer

need to take part in it; you will be above it."

"That almost sounds like saying war is right, and though I feel that right and wrong are relative terms and that there are times when you cannot reason about a thing, but just do what seems right at the time and trust God about the rest, that is not your position. You have proclaimed that 'love overcometh hatred.' "

"Yes, I know," he said, rather sadly, "but I see that my countrymen are not refraining from acts of physical violence because of love for their fellows, but from cowardice, and peace with cowardice is much worse than a battlefield with bravery. I would rather they died fighting than cringed in fear."

Indeed, it was with great difficulty that some of his friends, including my husband, prevailed upon him not to offer himself as a combatant soldier, as an example to others.

. . . . .

I often tried to talk with him of what he thought happened after death, but his mind never speculated about the next condition. His religious experience was that of the mystic, not of the metaphysician, and though he would talk freely of reincarnation, he would not talk of what might happen ten minutes after a man is called "dead." On one occasion I was telling him of some psychic experience of one of our friends. He

grew quite impatient about it, and thought it altogether a waste of time to want to know about after-death conditions.

"But it is not a waste of time and energy to some people," I said. "They feel more interested in trying to pierce behind the veil of death, than they are about life."

"But their duty lies in attending to the affairs about them in making the conditions for their fellows more happy," replied Mr. Gandhi.

"And don't you think it would make them happy if they could know more about the meaning of death?" I enquired.

"They have not got to worry about that. Death does not matter."

"Yet we cry about that most," I said; but Mr. Gandhi changed the subject. He would not carry it further.

. . . . .

My anticipated few months in India were prolonged by the War into two years. My husband had, however—after a very serious illness during which he nearly died and which rendered him unfit for many months—returned to England alone, leaving me with my sister and children commended to the care of Mr. Gandhi. At the time my husband sailed from Bombay I was ill myself. The prolonged nursing of my husband and little son had worn

me out, and on the eve of a collapse I succumbed to a bad attack of malaria.

Mr. Gandhi had come down to Bombay for a few days, and after leaving the docks, where he had seen my husband off, came immediately on to me. Days passed, the fever continued, and Mr. Gandhi grew quite anxious about me. He refused to leave Bombay until I had got over the worst part of my illness, and came every day to see how I was getting along. He would sit beside my bed talking to me, while all I could do was to lie and let the tears tumble down my cheeks. He never suggested that I was foolish or weak, or exhorted me to pull myself together, as a less understanding person might have done. He would just sit there telling me little interesting scraps of gossip or news and occasionally trying to make me smile by some whimsicality.

I know that he had important work waiting for him in Ahmedabad, and that he was neglecting it for my sake. Once I suggested to him that he had better go, adding that I would be all right with the dear Indian friend in whose home I was receiving hospitality and care.

"No," he replied, "I cannot leave you until you are better"; and so he stayed on until the temperature became normal, and he knew I was on the road to convalescence.

. . . . .

During my stay in India a day arrived when the sands of Mr. Gandhi's own life seemed running out. For weeks he had been ill with some intestinal trouble. Two doctors were in constant attendance upon him, and were at their wits' end to know how to feed him. They believed milk to be the only thing to keep him going, but as he had taken a vow about the taking of cow's milk, neither the arguments of the doctors nor the absolute pleading on her knees of Mrs. Gandhi would make him break his vow. So those of us who loved him watched him sinking. I was at the time two days' journey away from him, but was kept constantly advised of his condition. Then I received a little note of farewell, dictated by him to an amanuensis. He was dying and wished to send me a word of affection ere he passed out. Something within me told me it was not the end, and I wrote telling him so, adding that I knew his work for India was not yet finished, and that it was not "good-bye."

He recovered under conditions of which he himself told me much later. He was content to leave the fleshly body that worried and hampered him so, and if milk was the only thing to save his body, he refused to break his vow by taking it. Then he said: "It was Ba (Mrs. Gandhi) who discovered a way. She said to me: 'Your vow was taken against the milk of the cow, but it was not against the milk of the goat, so you can

take goat's milk and still keep your vow.' You women are very persistent and clever," he added, with a twinkle in his eye and an intonation in the voice, as though he almost admired Mrs. Gandhi for the subtle distinction she had been able to make use of to restore him to health. The goat's milk had proved a great success, fortunately, and he gradually became himself again.



## CHAPTER XVIII

Mr. Gandhi knew of my deep anxiety to get home to England as soon as possible after the War, and sympathized with my desire to join my husband again. He had often deplored the fact that we had had to endure several long separations, and hoped the day would come when we could have the comfort of some settled home-life together. He had, nevertheless, sometimes teasingly remarked that the separations were good for us, as they kept our married life from becoming monotonous.

"That is all very well," I once replied. "But separations break as well as bind."

"That is not possible in your case," he said. "I *know*. Henry is a most loyal soul."

"Do you mean, by that remark, *I am not?*" I replied quickly. "I still sometimes wonder if you do not believe that men have a monopoly of the higher virtues!"

"If you were not true to Henry you would prove it in this case!"

A remark that silenced me.

As soon as the War was over and the passenger-service between India and England was resumed, I received a letter from Mr. Gandhi advising me to give up my little bungalow in the Nilgiris and to make preparations to come to Bombay at once.

It was a two days' journey away from him, and I had not seen him for nearly two years, so that I was distressed when, six weeks later, I met him again and noted how weak and ill he still was. He, however, declared that he was almost himself again, and expressed great concern about me and my little family.

The dreadful influenza epidemic that had devastated India was just over, and in the little hill-station of Coonoor, where I had been staying, I had seen its tragic effects. The utter helplessness of humanity, as I had observed it around me, in the face of such a calamity, had left a deep, unhappy impression upon me. Death seemed much more real than life, for death had claimed more people in Coonoor than it had left. My sister, my two children, myself, and my little staff had all suffered from the epidemic, but fortunately all had recovered. As there was no medical man to be had, my sister and I had done the best we could for the little household, with any remedies we could think of and procure. I belonged neither to the military nor to other services, and was, in fact, practically ostracized by the Europeans of the station, who knew that my husband had been so closely associated with Mr. Gandhi in South Africa, so I could get no help at all from them. My sister and I thus had had to struggle through a very black six weeks almost alone. For nearly a month my servants

were too ill to work, and we had to attend to them in addition to my children. We had been unable to purchase fuel of any kind—there was none to be bought, the vendors of fuel were all sick or dead—and we were dependent upon a little boy of about eight years of age—a relative of my butler—going to a bit of jungle-ground near by to collect a few sticks to make hot milk or porridge ready for the invalids. Other cooking we did not trouble about.

In telling some of these things to Mr. Gandhi he was grieved and distressed. To add to his anxiety about us, cholera was raging in Bombay when we arrived, and he was afraid for us to remain in the city.

“Now you are here,” he said, “I cannot have you staying on. You must get to Matheran (the nearest hill-station to Bombay) and stay there until you get a boat. I cannot bear the responsibility of having you here while this new trouble is sweeping over us. Please make arrangements, then, to go there at once.”

“But I have no money,” I objected. “What am I to do about that?”

“That is not for you to worry about. I will attend to it somehow. All I want you to do is to get well and keep well.”

“And the arrangements for going home?” I asked. “What am I to do about that?”

“You will have to go before a Board to get

your passages fixed; but first of all you will have to get an urgent medical certificate to entitle you to an early boat. We must see what can be done."

Even while I was talking to Mr. Gandhi he was thinking over all the things I should have to do and arranging them from his sick-bed, sending a message here or a note there. And so, next day, I left Bombay for Matheran, after having been before two doctors and the Passenger Board. There I stayed for six weeks, waiting for my boat. Every week I came into Bombay to see Mr. Gandhi and to attend to other matters.

Once, feeling greatly depressed, I told him that I could now understand the worship of Kali in India; death seemed so terribly near and easy everywhere, and life so difficult.

"But," he smiled, rather sadly, "you would not escape it. You would have to come back again."

I did not answer him and we sat quietly for a few minutes.

"I once thought," he then continued, "that I could finish the wheel of rebirth in this incarnation. I know now that I can't, and that I shall have to return to it. We cannot escape it, but I hope it will only be once more that I come back to it."

"It is not that I am tired of living," I said. "There is always something beautiful in life

itself to me. The thought of birth and re-birth does not sadden me, but death stalks grey and naked here. I feel it is easy to give in to it."

"That is not like you," replied Mr. Gandhi. "You are letting your imagination make you a coward. Where is your faith?"

"At the present time, rather weak, I am afraid."

"Come, come, you are not being true to yourself. I cannot let you talk like that!"

Eventually the day arrived for me to leave India. Mr. Gandhi was still unable to take much part in active life, so that I had gone with my children to say "good-bye" to him. The thought, I believe, was in both our minds: "Shall we ever meet again in the flesh?"











